Highways & Byways in NORTH WALES

by

A. G. Bradley

With Illustrations by

JOSEPH PENNELL

AND

HUGH THOMSON

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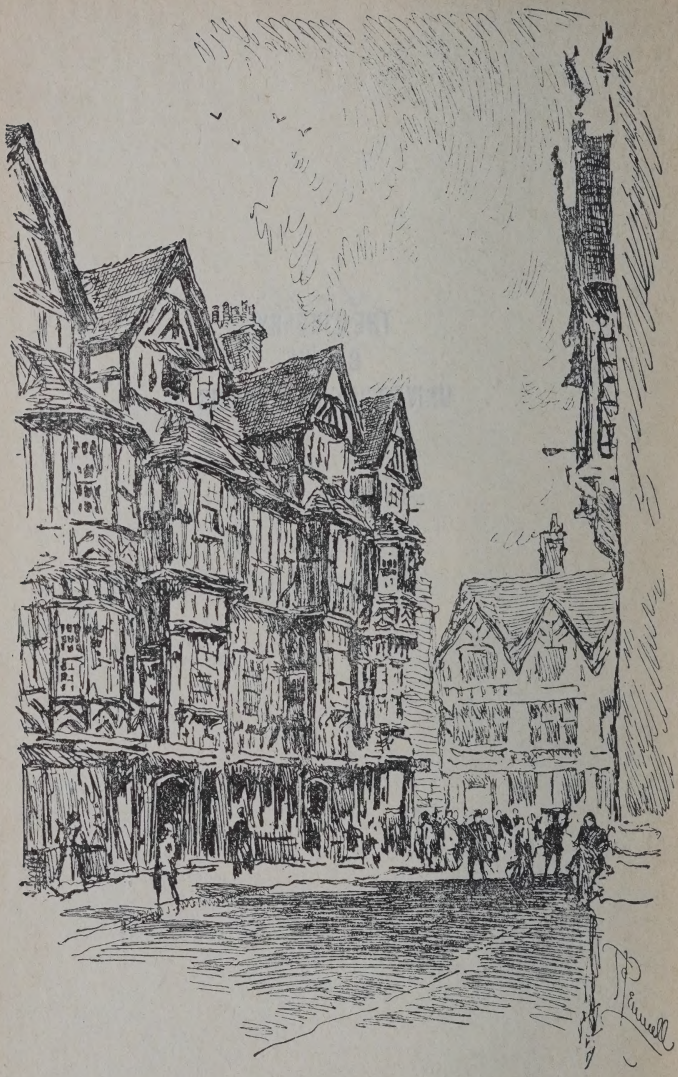


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An Old Street in Shrewsbury.

Highways and Byways in North Wales

BY

A. G. BRADLEY

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOSEPH PENNELL AND HUGH THOMSON

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HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

IN

NORTH WALES

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

IN

NORTH WALES

CHAPTER I

SHREWSBURY

"WHERE shall I label your luggage for, sir?"

"Shrewsbury."

"Oh, Shr*oo*sbury, sir! Ten-thirty; Number two platform, sir," says the Paddington porter in a tone of respectful rebuke.

"Where for, please sir?" says the inspector, poking his head in at the carriage window ten minutes later.

"Shrowsbury" you reply, pronouncing the name in the only possible fashion that the most elementary acquaintance with the capital of proud Salopia admits of.

"Shr*oo*sbury, sir? All right for Shr*oo*sbury."

Nor is this all. Should you venture an inquiry at Oxford or Birmingham concerning the time of arrival at your destination you will be almost certainly snubbed in the same exasperating and unmistakably corrective fashion: "Shr*oo*sbury? Three-thirty, Shr*oo*sbury."

I do believe there is no town in England so defiantly mispronounced among high and low, for railway porters and their

kind are by no means the only transgressors. This, of course, is always supposing that we allow a town, like an individual to be the best judge of the pronunciation of its own name. In any case, I should not recommend a visitor to go Shr*oo*sburying about Shropshire any more than he would go down to Greenwich, for instance, and pronounce that historic home of whitebait and pensioners as he would Sandwich, for which difference there is, of course, nothing more nor less to be said than there is for the cause of friction between the Paddington porter and myself in the matter of Shrewsbury.

The famous Doctor Kennedy, of whom I shall speak anon, took this matter, I believe, greatly to heart. When at a Cambridge dinner-party, or in polite society elsewhere outside the scene of his scholastic triumphs, I have heard that his eye flashed on any such offender with a ferocity almost as great as that with which it blazed at the sound of a false quantity. He could neither birch nor expel, nor set five hundred lines to his *vis à vis* at a dinner-party, it is true; but I have been informed by people who ought to know that he never failed greatly to improve the occasion and to leave one outsider, at any rate, with an undying impression of the right method of pronouncing the name of Salop's ancient capital.

Chester, I am quite aware, considers itself immeasurably ahead of Shrewsbury in the attractions it offers to the tourist, and, as everybody knows, draws a great stream of sightseers, particularly Americans; while few people, I fancy, go much out of their way to visit the old Shropshire town.

I hope it is not from any unworthy resentment at what seem to me the somewhat over-weening pretensions of Chester, that I am introducing the reader to Wales by way of Shrewsbury and the Shropshire border. I sincerely believe there are good reasons for this, and not the least of them the fact that Shrewsbury, unlike Chester, is little known, and has nothing like the outside reputation it deserves, and if by a brief glance at it I may haply induce a few travellers, who would otherwise pass by,

to linger there for a few hours, I feel that the first chapter of this book, at any rate, will not have been written in vain. Both towns are sometimes spoken of as the "Capital of Wales," but Shrewsbury, being more central, has had in the past, at any rate, a wider and a deeper grip of the Principality than the Cheshire town. It has done upon the whole, in remote times, more fighting with the Welsh, and has been more generally resorted to in later ones, both for social and educational purposes, by their upper classes than the more northern city; while flannel and black cattle must have found their way into England in greater volume through this central market than by way of either the northern or the southern extremity of the Marches.

Chester has, of course, its Cathedral, whereas Shrewsbury has only its Abbey Church and its beautiful St. Mary's. The walls of Chester, too, are much more perfect, while its famous "Rows" have, beyond a doubt, no counterpart upon so large a scale in England.

But I must confess these always seem to me a trifle self-conscious and to carry a suspicion of being swept and garnished for the dollar-distributing visitor from beyond the Atlantic, and a suggestion of being less genuine than they, in fact, really are. However that may be, the moment you are outside these show streets of Chester there is a singular lack of charm about the environment. The taint of commerce and the smoke of the North hangs heavily and unmistakably upon its horizon. Its immediate surroundings are modern and garish to a degree and by no means assist the fiction that Chester is still the unadulterated old county town one would like to think it. Now Shrewsbury on the contrary is a sweet-aired, genuine, dignified, and proud old market town, the resort of squires, parsons and farmers, and mainly inhabited by those who minister to their wants. It never dreams of itself as a show place. I always think, indeed, of Shrewsbury and Exeter as bearing some sort of relation towards each other, and lifted

above the average provincial town for many similar reasons. Each is the capital of a large, wealthy and conservative county, and both of them have what, to borrow a perhaps not very appropriate Americanism, we might call a great "back country," Wales in large part on the one hand and Cornwall on the other, without important centres of their own. Some years ago, too, a little book was published by a zealous antiquary—not a Shropshire man—enumerating with much detail all the families of England, of a certain consequence, who still occupied either the same estates or estates contiguous to those upon which they were living in the fifteenth century. Shropshire in this honourable competition very easily headed the list, and thereby, perhaps, justified that title of "Proud Salopians," which the more consequential of its people submit to with much complacency, even though it be not always applied in a wholly serious vein.

The station at Shrewsbury, though it recalls with more fidelity than almost any considerable station I know, the primitive days of railroad travelling, is not a mile out in the country as is the case with so many provincial towns, whose people have good cause to curse the timidity of their predecessors. Once out of its yard you are climbing steadily up the main street to the heart of the town, where stands the old market-place. Upon the left rises the Castle, of red sandstone, built by Edward the First to secure Shrewsbury against the vengeance of the Welsh, which might well and with good cause be looked for when the terror of his presence should be removed. Higher up Castle Street, upon the right, are the old buildings of the famous Grammar School, now deserted for one of the most beautiful academic sites in the kingdom. Set back in a court, on the other side, stands the old Council House, where Charles the First gathered his loyal but desponding followers, and his ignoble son, James II., kept the same state in later years, and where the great *Court of the Marches*, that for two centuries, even to the time of William

III, was accustomed, when at Shrewsbury, to sit. The beautiful Church of St. Mary's, with its fine spire and stone-work and carved roof and wonderful stained-glass windows, stands near by. Further on, too, is "Butcher Row," a narrow wynd of projecting black and white houses of the early English type. In the centre of the old market-place stands one of the most beautiful Tudor market-houses in England, and a statue of Clive in front of it reminds us that he was a Shropshire man. Many of the town houses, to which notable Shropshire families resorted in former days when London was outside the limit of the country squire's vision, are scattered around, rich in carved oak and antique ornate exteriors. In a lofty column rising heavenwards in a far part of the town, the memory of one of the most famous scions of the old Salopian stocks, General Lord Hill, of Hawkestone, Wellington's favourite lieutenant and his successor, is kept green.

There are indeed whole streets and terraces in Shrewsbury that do not lend themselves particularly to description, nor look in the least degree as if they courted admiration, yet people who have a fancy for quiet, clean rows of houses, erected in the Queen Anne or early Hanoverian period, with their mellow red brick fronts and old tiles, and snug bits of garden hidden away behind sunny walls, will find much satisfaction in wandering among them. The town walls too are still perfect at certain spots, dropping sheer down with their warm red stone into green meadows, through which the river but a bow-shot off urges its rapid encircling course: for the Severn here describes a sudden and most remarkable horse-shoe curve, the town lying within it, and thus defended upon almost every side, not only by walls but by water. Upon the east side it is approached by the English bridge, rebuilt more than a hundred years ago. Upon the west by the Welsh bridge, name of significant omen in the old days of race hatreds and race wars. The Abbey, outside both walls and river, is an

imposing pile, beautifully restored, and well worthy to be a Cathedral when Shrewsbury becomes, as it some day will, the centre of a new diocese. It is interesting too on account of its site and the human dust that lies beneath it. But the great pride of Shrewsbury, after all is its Quarry—its park, in short —which slopes from the western edge of the town in a gentle incline to the river bank, and is both bordered and bisected by avenues of ancient limes that surpass in height and bulk even those stately groves that patriotic sons of Trinity, Cambridge, are accustomed to regard as unequalled and incomparable.

Shrewsbury began life very early as Pengwern, the capital of Powys, and remained a Welsh town for long after the Saxon Conquest. It was not indeed till Offa, King of Mercia, at the end of the eighth century, could no longer tolerate the aggressive action of the Welsh, that he collected a vast army and with a great effort drove them once and for all out of what is now Shropshire, and cut that famous dyke, still bearing his name, along the ridges of the border hills, which for many a long day no Welshman crossed except as an enemy and raider. In the delightfully quaint English of Dr. Powell, "he was so heartily nettled at these bo-peep ravagings of the Welsh he would compliment them all to their holes." In short, he cleared Shropshire and Saxonized it: Pengwern became Shrobbesberrie, and as anti-Welsh as Worcester or Derby. To say Parliaments were held here is hardly necessary when one remembers to what far more obscure places these autocratic, hard-riding, hard-hitting, restless Plantagenets summoned their Knights of Shires. In truth, this ancient attitude of Shrewsbury to Wales, added to its position in its own great county, gives it a peculiar interest. Shrewsbury juries too, and Shrewsbury judges, were continually in request for the punishment of implacable Kymri, who would certainly have found nothing but sympathy among their own countrymen and peers. And Shrewsbury, at the King's nod, was always ready to give its legal *cachet* to the hanging of a Welshman who was troublesome, provided, of

course, he could be caught. But then after these bellicose and spirited times, when the two countries settled down into a peaceful partnership, Shrewsbury in a fashion wholly friendly became, as I have said, in some sort a Welsh town.

Now there is a third bridge spanning the river in a westward direction, neither old, nor in itself picturesque, but providing those who cross it with a most charming view of the river. For the latter, all alive as it is apt to be on a summer afternoon with racing boats and less ambitious craft, is bounded on the one side with the splendid lime-trees of the Quarry, and on the other by the steep green hills, on whose crest stand the new buildings which Shrewsbury's famous school has now occupied for these last twenty years or so. It is the outlook from this high plateau that constitutes its chief beauty. The backward view over the river is delightful, the warm hues of the red sandstone and red brick of the town showing out beyond the intervening woodland; but it is the great sweep towards the west that chiefly catches the fancy. For on the far side of a ten-mile stretch of rich Shropshire lowland, untainted by the smoke of mines or factories, the rampart of hills which roughly marks the Welsh border fills the horizon for a space that, from north to south, can be little less than fifty miles, with a host of well-known and suggestive and bold outstanding landmarks.

There, upon the edge of sight, to the southward, is the hump of Caradoc and the bold outlines of the Stretton Hills. Plainer yet and nearer are the Styper Stones with their rugged summit, and Corndon Beacon over Chirbury, where the famous Lord Herbert of that ilk reigned as scholar, warrior and squire. Northward again and closer, and almost directly fronting us, are the Breidden, looking veritably what in fact they are, two noble pillars of the chief gateway into mid-Wales.

From this gap, so nobly guarded by these stately twins, to the misty outlines of the mountains above Chirk and Llan-

gollen, there is no visible break of moment in the high rampart that so effectually and so continuously shuts out the still wilder Wales that lies behind. We can well fancy how anxiously and how often, and for how many generations in the turbulent days of old the straining eyes of Shrewsbury citizens must have scanned this far-stretching outline of rolling hills, which hid behind them such a world of restless enemies, ready at most times, and often without note or warning, to come rushing out through the passes, scattering fire and sword through the rich lowlands that had once been part of their ancient land of Powys.

Nor must we leave Shrewsbury without a few words about its famous school. And if it may not perhaps seem exactly germane to our subject, I may fairly plead the fact that it was for generations a great resort of the sons of the Welsh squirearchy, and is intimately bound up with Shropshire life, and fondly cherished by Salopians of all degrees. Even this, perhaps, would not justify our loitering on these heights of Kingsland if this old Foundation, so happy in its new abode, had not been something more, and made for itself a name among the great schools of England and a record that in its way is certainly unique. The ups and downs of Shrewsbury School, as of many others, are picturesque. I have seen a list of the scholars who were in residence during the troublous times of the Civil War, scrawled in an old note-book by their headmaster, the hundred and seventy names or thereabouts being followed by plaintive lamentations on the disjointedness of the times and the struggles which befel him after his ejection in consequence of the ill-usage of the Parliamentarians. When Dr. Butler, however, of famous memory, took up the reins of office, in 1798, he found a strange state of things, as may be read in his life so lately published. The boarders had been reduced to one boy, and the head and second masters were accustomed to kill time by jumping competitions at a flitch of bacon suspended from the kitchen ceiling! A revival however



Scrawled in an old note-book

followed under Butler that was almost as marvellous as that epoch so memorable to Harrovians, when the late Dean of Llandaff expanded a disorganised remnant of 68 boys into a prosperous and healthy community of 300 in about 18 months —for Harrow was ever fashionable and hard to kill. Butler in a short time, with few such advantages, had turned the solitary boarder into a crowd which more than filled the old buildings in Castle Street that we passed as we came up from the station, and the school to its full limit of 300. But this is not the point, except in so far as to note the comparatively limited material out of which Butler and Kennedy, who followed him, wrought such wonders.

Old University men, and more particularly Cambridge men, would be better prepared, probably, than present ones for the really wonderful tale that is told by the honour boards that cover the walls of the corridor in the new buildings. I am not speaking of present times—because in the face of modern competition now, such a share of academic spoils and honours would be absolutely impossible for the most vigorous and powerful of public schools—but of the period of Butler and Kennedy, the first half, that is to say, of the century. All elderly and middle-aged men who have been at college are, of course, familiar enough with the reputation for precise scholarship enjoyed by their contemporaries from Shrewsbury, and will remember what a standing terror they were to all other aspirants for academic laurels. But even they would, I think, be somewhat startled by an actual inspection of these old Shrewsbury boards. It is not for us to linger over them. But we may note one or two, the one for instance, where the three first boys of the school came out at Cambridge, three years afterwards, in the same order, first, second, and third classic; and another bearing the only name honoured by letters of gold—that of the precocious youth who won the "Ireland" at Oxford in jackets, as it is said, but at any rate some time before he left school, to the considerable consternation of the examiners; for

the Ireland, it will be remembered, is a distinction coveted and competed for by the most brilliant undergraduates of all stages of residence at Oxford. The identity of this precocious schoolboy seems to have escaped the notice of the Dons till the result of his successful papers sprang him upon their attention, somewhat to their disconcertment and caused, I believe, some precautionary measures to be taken lest such an untoward event should occur again. Nor should I like to say how many years during this brilliant period the Porson Prize at Cambridge fell to Salopians. This old Shrewsbury Scholarship was of a kind so precise no doubt as to invite criticism, and it has had plenty of critics, but that is a matter alien indeed to our subject here.

Dr. Butler's achievements are all that is left to remind Salopians of his sojourn among them. But this is not the case with Kennedy, and it would be ill leaving Shrewsbury without a passing mention of the conspicuous place which the figure of the famous doctor still holds in its memory. One of the old school, with prejudices almost as great as his abilities, and a temper as warm as his heart, it is natural enough that anecdote, as well no doubt as legend, should be still busy with his name, and the stories that are told about him—all, however, out of the fulness of Salopian pride and affection—would fill a book. It does not appear that the doctor was, for his kind and his generation, especially given to the birch, but his passionate agony at such transgressions in scholarship or grammar as more particularly outraged his notorious sensitiveness on such matters, is well known, and I have heard old pupils recall being hunted for their lives, so to speak, round the doctor's study table after some such lapse as this, the chief after them well-armed and in hot pursuit.

There is a famous story too, of how once upon a time, in a burst of righteous anger, at some piece of wholesale slackness in examination, he expelled his entire sixth form—though the sentence, it need hardly be said, was ultimately cancelled.

It is a far cry from Doctor Kennedy to Henry of Bolingbroke, to Hotspur and Glyndwr. But of all the memories which Shrewsbury arouses as one stands looking out from its walls or its red Castle towers, I always think that the one of this fierce fight, the bloodiest that, since the Norman Conquest, had dyed the fields of England, is the most inspiring. No wonder the fancy of Shakespeare was seized by it, and by the storms that gathered round the usurping Bolingbroke, who had so counted on a glorious crusade to Palestine and a peaceful England.

> "No more shall trenching war channel her fields,
> Nor bruise her flowerets with the armed hoofs"
> Of hostile pacers.

had been the vain hope indeed of this much harassed monarch but a short time before he had, thus at a moment's notice, to fight for his kingdom and his crown at Shrewsbury.

If there are a vast number of people who care nothing for history and less for battlefields, there are few probably who have escaped the fascination of Falstaff's humours as a man of war. So, though the "bloudie fielde of Shrobbesberrie" is not precisely on our road to Wales, I propose to make the slight detour necessary for a passing glance at it.

To do this we must recross the bridge, climb to the top of the town, and descend Castle Street, leaving the station upon our right: and passing on through Castle foregate, follow the road trodden by the anxious Henry, his gifted son and his valiant army on that warm morning of July the twentieth, 1403. It is a level road, and leads nearly due north to Whitchurch, passing for some time through the most modern and unprepossessing part of outlying Shrewsbury. Beyond these limits there is nothing noteworthy upon either hand, unless you have that invaluable and unfailing support to the traveller—a taste for agriculture. Henry's soldiers, however, did not march between hedgerows and fields of wheat and hay and turnips, but over a great open heath which, in those days,

stretched far northwards from the town. About three miles from Shrewsbury, and set a little distance back from the road



Shrewsbury Castle.

upon the left hand, and across the railway, stands the edifice known as Battlefield Church. I know of no other building of the kind in England that has quite such a tale to tell. It is now

a simple parish church, with a congregation which the very nature of its endowment and situation makes a limited one, for it was not built with any view to the needs of its neighbourhood, but simply and solely as a contemporary memorial—and something more—of the slaughter that took place upon this Hately field five centuries ago. Let us follow the lane leading to it, and pass through the gate into the green graveyard where, among the quiet Shropshire fields, and to all seeming forgotten by the outer world, these rarely significant and suggestive walls arise. The restorer has more than once been unavoidably called to their rescue, but still the lower part at any rate of the old church was raised by the hands of men who must have actually witnessed, and possibly taken a part in, the memorable battle. Nor was this church by any means erected upon some chance spot or at random upon the field, as a memorial only of the fight; but where the latter was fiercest and the dead lay thickest and were huddled by hundreds into great pits, Roger Ive, priest of Leaton and rector of Allbright Hussey in the year 1406, with the consent of the King, raised these walls and endowed them together with a College, long since disappeared. And here masses were to be said for ever and ever for the souls of the dead whose bones lay by thousands under and around them, not forgetting, of course, those of Roger Ive and his master, King Henry, whose effigy still looks out from over the east window towards yonder ridge of Haughmond, where so many of his flying enemies sought refuge on that sanguinary summer night. Not often has an English King been called upon to fight at such short notice those whom he had to that very moment regarded as his staunchest friends. Harried by Glyndwr, threatened by France, warred upon by Scotland, Henry had enjoyed scarcely a day's peace upon the throne he had seized with such high hand, and there were plenty in those times who declared that even his nights were not free from troublous visions of the murdered Richard. The Percies of Northumberland had been the most faithful

and the most powerful of his friends. They had practically placed him on the throne, and were even now the King's trusty guardians of the Scottish Marches. They had defeated the Scots at Homildon, and were yet loaded with valuable unransomed prisoners from that hot encounter. There had been of late some trifling coolness between the friends, but there is no need here to notice its causes, nor is it worth while, for such a departure as the one that led to Shrewsbury fight was wholly undreamt of in the South. The King was actually on his way northwards to support the Percies against the Scots, and had reached Burton-on-Trent when the astounding news reached him that the former were in full march for the Welsh border, where Glyndwr and his army were to join them. Glyndwr had been three years in arms. He had with him his erst captive and now ally and son-in-law, Edmund Mortimer, the adult representative of the family whose claim to the throne was better than Bolingbroke's, who had the actual heir, the boy Earl of March, in safe custody. The "Tripartite alliance," under which Glyndwr, the Mortimers, and the Percies were to divide England and Wales between them, is supposed to have preceded this movement towards united action, which, as we shall see, so lamentably failed. The King had with him a considerable force. His son, the Prince, then but a boy, had been this long time watching the Welsh upon the southern marches with another army. The two had just time to join forces and hurry on to Shrewsbury, which they reached a few hours only before Henry Percy, the famous Hotspur, who had with him a mixed force from Northumberland and Yorkshire, together with all the available levies of the turbulent and dissatisfied counties of Chester and Flint. Many of the Scotch prisoners too from Homildon had gladly given him their services in lieu of ransom, in all some 14,000 men. The Earl of Northumberland, fortunately for himself, was detained in the North by illness, but his brother of Worcester had hastened

from the King's very side to share the fortunes of his kinsmen and to be, as some say, their evil genius upon this fateful day. Hotspur had pushed his forces right up to the gates of Shrewsbury on the evening of the 19th before he discovered that the King and his army had forestalled him and were already in possession. He then fell back on the hamlet of Upper Berwick, encamping his troops there for the night and sleeping himself at the mansion of the Bettons.

Hotspur was brave enough, but the King had double his forces, and when morning broke and no sign of Glyndwr appeared, even his stout heart began to quail. Historians and poets have loosely blamed the Welsh chieftain for this seeming remissness, but Glyndwr, it now seems almost certain, was busy before Caermarthen, nearly a hundred miles off, and had received no definite call to Shrewsbury. So the famous Shelton oak upon the Welshpool road from whose branches he is supposed to have watched the fight must, unhappily for its own reputation though not for Glyndwr's, be regarded as an impostor. There was, perhaps, no choice for Hotspur but to stay and meet these great odds. At any rate he decided to do so, and led his army in the morning over to Hately field and drew it up in battle array, with its centre on or about the spot where the church now stands. Percy's buoyant spirit seems at this moment to have been tinged with some melancholy foreboding of his coming doom; for when he called for his sword and was told that by some mischance it had been left at Berwick, the village where he had passed the night, and whose name he had not before heard, he turned pale and said, "I perceive my plough is drawing towards its last furrow, for an old wizard in Northumberland foretold that I should perish at Berwick, which I vainly interpreted as that town in the North." He had carved the outline of his hand too upon a panel in the wall of the Betton mansion, and a local witch prophesied that the Bettons would retain their property only so long as the panel was preserved

in their family. The heirloom was lost early in the present century, and the estate, so far as the Bettons were concerned, soon followed it.

The King had marched his army out in two divisions against Hotspur, who was still manœuvring, with a view of crushing him between them. Perhaps he wanted after all to give his old friend a chance to escape. At any rate he was slow enough in moving, for it must have been after noonday when the armies faced each other on Hately field, a stretch of growing peas before them and a gentle slope behind giving that of the Percies some slight advantage. Even then there was great delay, creditable enough to the King, seeing that it was caused by the attempts of his mediator, the Abbot of Shrewsbury, at this eleventh hour, to effect a reconciliation. Hotspur, it is said, was touched by these generous overtures, but his uncle of Worcester, showing a strangely hot head beneath his grey hairs, insisted on this rash appeal to arms.

So the shadows were already lengthening when the two armies, numbering in all over 40,000 men, and full of the highest and noblest blood in England, met in the shock of battle. Lord Archibald Douglas, the chief of the Scottish prisoners from Homildon, was with Hotspur, and great numbers of Welshmen, identifying his cause with that of Richard II. whom they were half persuaded was still alive, flocked to his standard, wearing Richard's badge, the white hart, upon their shields and tunics.

Percy's Cheshire archers, among the finest in England, opened the battle with a deadly hail of arrows. It was probably the first time since the high development of English archery that Englishmen had themselves to face those terrible goose-winged shafts that had stricken France from end to end, and but recently cowed the boldest chivalry of Scotland. This first discharge of arrows every account speaks of as terrific. "They fell upon the king's troops," said Walsingham, "like leaves upon the ground in autumn. Every one struck a

mortal man." The royal army could make no head against it, and their formation was badly shaken. Archers and spearmen shrank from the deadly whistling storm, as their comrades fell upon every side of them. Prince Henry, then only a boy of fifteen, was wounded in the face, but resisted every attempt to drag him from the field. A sudden onslaught of the Northern army, coupled with a cry that the King had fallen, created for the moment a wild confusion, and the fate of England and the House of Lancaster trembled in the balance. Many turned to flee, the royal standard was overthrown, and the young Earl of Stafford, Constable of England, fell dead beside it. But Henry of Bolingbroke was at least every inch a soldier, and riding backwards and forwards through his shaken army, to show that he was still unhurt, he rallied his soldiers by voice and gesture to a fresh resistance, and finally to a spirited advance, for which their superior numbers with equal valour and discipline ensured success.

It was now a desperate struggle, hand to hand and foot to foot, such as could have but one end. And yet strangely enough, fierce as it was, this was a battle into which little hatred of race entered, nor could partisan feeling have as yet had time, one would have thought, to wax so warm. "Yet it was more to be noted vengeable," says Fabian, "for here the father was slain of the son and the son of the father," Richard Hussey's pea field must have presented a sorry sight that harvest!

Some details of the bloody hurly-burly have been preserved to us. Hotspur's prowess shone conspicuous above all on this, the last evening of his stormy and eventful life. For again and again, in company with the valiant Scot, Lord Archibald Douglas, and thirty chosen knights, he rode through the royal army seeking the King, though by some mischance, both being veritable lions in their conduct, they failed to meet. It was after all somewhere on the flanks that the gallant Hotspur at length fell, and then a great shout arose, started by the

King himself, that the fierce Northumbrian whelp was dead. It was the beginning of the end. The battle had raged for three hours around the spot where the church now stands, and the sun was drooping to the Montgomery hills when the Percies' army, unable any more to combat such great odds, at length broke and fled, heading for Wem in the north, or seeking nearer refuge in the wooded ridge of Haughmond to the east. The slaughter, which lasted through the hours of sunset and twilight, was tremendous. The very moon that



Battlefield Church.

rose early upon the bloody scene and would have perhaps aggravated it, hid her face behind a timely eclipse, which the sages of that day knew well how to make the most of. "Men lay down," says Walsingham, "in mixed heaps, weary and beaten and bleeding." It was a lamentable business. Even upon the King's side 4,600 are said to have been killed and wounded, while of Hotspur's small army 5,000 by the most moderate accounts were actually slain, of whom 200 were knights and gentlemen of Cheshire.

There Dutton, Dutton kills ; A Done doth kill a Done ;
A Booth, a Booth ; and Leigh by Leigh is overthrown ;
A Venables against a Venables doth stand ;
And Troutbeck fighteth with a Troutbeck hand to hand ;
There Moleneux doth make a Moleneux to die ;
And Egerton the strength of Egerton doth try ;
O, Cheshire, wert thou mad, of thine own native gore,
So much until this day thou never shedst before !

The Earl of Worcester was taken prisoner and beheaded, as he no doubt deserved to be, with many others. The rank and file of the dead, as I have before noted, were shovelled into great pits under or near where this Battlefield Church now stands, and no great while ago, when workmen were digging a drain from the Corbet vault, they found themselves cutting through masses of human bones. To give a list of the illustrious dead would weary the reader. Some lie in leaden coffins beneath the floor of the church, more in the older graveyards of Shrewsbury. Hotspur was buried by his kinsman, Lord Furnival, but his body was almost immediately exhumed by the King and placed upright between two millstones near the pillory at Shrewsbury, a ghastly testimony to all people that the brave Northumbrian chieftain was in truth dead. His head and quarters were then sent, after the fashion of the times, to decorate the gates of various English cities, and Henry of Bolingbroke breathed freely for a space, as indeed, if valour merits any reward, he well deserved to upon his much-troubled throne.

CHAPTER II

SHREWSBURY—LLANGOLLEN

THOUGH much of the route I have proposed to myself for this little tour in North Wales passes through some of the grandest, as well as the loveliest, scenery in Britain, there will be scarcely a stage that the most elementary cyclist cannot travel, not merely with ease, but I might almost say with luxury, for the roads of North Wales are not only for the most part admirable in themselves, but admirably graded, which is as much to the point. To pretend that a tourist can extract as much pleasure out of a mountain country, from any sort of vehicle, as he can on foot, would be of course ridiculous, though not more so than the absurd contention sometimes urged, that the beauties of landscape remain unrevealed to those who, from choice or the nature of their mode of progression, stick to the road. At any rate, this is singularly inapplicable to North Wales, where I do not think it would be easy to put one's finger upon a dull mile, and where one is never penned up, as in the West of England, between high fences, that may be the joy of botanists but are certainly the torment of the traveller.

In any case, it is not my mission in this little work to ramble over mountain tops, or to follow any of the thousand delightful paths, through wood and meadow and moorland,

in which the pedestrian finds here such ceaseless and rare delight, and I may add, to the surprise perhaps of some people, such solitude. The many excellent guide books to North Wales point out with ample completeness and in great detail the best fashion in which to enjoy the natural beauties of the country. My object is merely to gossip along the high roads, where the present life and the past history of the country chiefly gathers, and to linger here and there in some sort of endeavour to fill up a little bit of the great blank which, except in mere physical outline, Wales as a country represents to the average Englishman. Perhaps my thoughts are running rather on history, for in this particular the candid attitude of even one's most accomplished acquaintances towards the past of Wales, gives one much confidence that such excursions will be into almost virgin fields. I only trust I shall not be tempted on this account to venture out upon them too often and too far. It is no slight temptation, the more so if one labours, under something like a conviction that Wales has been badly snubbed, not in a material sense, but that its heroic age has been ignored and its people even in more prosaic times much misunderstood and undervalued. But I am getting too serious and too sententious altogether and implying some sort of importance for the desultory gossip that is to follow, to which it lays no claim.

There is no occasion to return to Shrewsbury, for we are bound for Chirk, twenty miles away to the north-west, upon the Welsh frontier, and are already some little way upon the northern road. A couple of miles from Battlefield Church, by cross roads, will see us out upon the old Holyhead turnpike, and, so far as this book is concerned, we may pray for a south wind to carry us in romping fashion along the famous highway over the flat plains of Shropshire till we drop into a lateral valley, where the Ceiriog sings beneath us, and the frontier of Wales is crossed.

The Ceiriog is a real Welsh stream, clear and resonant, and as

superior to the rippling Shropshire brook as the latter is to the turgid sluggards of the Midlands. Coming from the heart of Wales, a happier welcome than it seems to give could not readily be imagined, and as one crosses the dividing bridge between the greater and the lesser country, a puff of mountain air blown from the far off Berwyns down the narrow tortuous valley seems to fill one's lungs with an earnest of good things to come. I don't know that this frontier village of Chirk need in itself greatly detain us. To tell the truth, though just within the straggling county of Denbigh, which finds its north-western extremity in the far off remoteness of Llandudno, Chirk is something of an English village, though a couple of miles in this border country makes oftentimes a difference in racial and lingual matters that would seem almost inconceivable in such a bustling, congested, progressive land as ours. There is a long broad street at the further end of which stands the Hand Hotel, full of the dignity of coaching memories, and having even now between cyclists, anglers and bagmen, I take it, not a great deal to complain of. At the other extremity is the Parish Church, where the really illustrious families of Brynkinallt and Chirk Castle—of Trevor and Myddelton, that is to say—are commemorated in stone and marble, and brass through many generations.

The gates of Brynkinallt being within a stone's throw, and at the very entrance of Wales, the house and park, though closed to the public, should not be passed by without mention, if only for the great antiquity and ancient splendour of the Trevor family upon the Welsh marches. Possibly a more popular attraction might be found in the memories of the great Duke of Wellington's boyhood which hang about the place, for his grandmother was a Trevor, Lady Dungannon, a now lapsed title of the family; and here the future conqueror of Napoleon was wont to spend his holidays when a boy at Eton. Here, too, he experienced the most serious defeat of his memorable career: for falling into a quarrel with a farmer's son over a

game of marbles, a desperate conflict ensued, in which the Duke was already beginning to hoist the flag of victory, when the farmer boy's big sister appeared upon the scene with a wetted towel. The advent of the Prussians at Waterloo was scarcely more happy for the Duke and his friends than the arrival of this stalwart girl was here for his enemy. Nor, according to all accounts, was the defeat of the French more crushing than the utter discomfiture of young Wellesley upon this occasion. The heroine of the affair lived to see her victim crowned with his fullest honours, and, as a portly matron and tenant of the family, to be quite a personage in the country side, on the strength of the thrashing she had administered to the hero of Europe in the days of their youth.

But it is the great Castle of Chirk, a mile or more to the west of the village, that overshadows all other interests in this neighbourhood. Known in old days as Castell y Waen by the Welsh, or "the Castle in the open meadow," it crowns the summit of a high swelling ridge, and looks thence westward far away up the deep valley of the Ceiriog into the very heart of a country wholly and entirely Welsh. Alone of all the great castles, of which Shropshire itself boasted thirty, that were built to guard and overawe the marches, Chirk still remains, in complete repair and occupied as a country house by its proprietors. And these, again, are no new people, but have inherited both name and estate from Sir Thomas Myddelton, scion of an ancient Denbigh stock, who acquired wealth and became Lord Mayor of London in the days of Elizabeth. His brother was the immortal founder of the New River Company, and his son, taking the side of the Commonwealth in the Civil War, was a prominent leader in all the Welsh operations, and among other calls of duty had the unpalatable task of pounding with artillery his own castle of Chirk, which had been seized by the Royalists.

Visitors who would see the treasures and the glories of Chirk Castle are admitted one day in the week, and it would

be well worth while going much further out of the way than we have to for such a privilege. An easy mile to the westward across the railway, carries us past the great lodge gates to the further entrance of the park. Thence for nearly as far again there is a steady ascent, under the shade always, of magnificent and immemorial oaks, that must have witnessed the fierce encounter of Cavalier and Roundhead, and for aught we know



Chirk Castle.

have been no more than saplings when the Mortimers here set their heel upon the neck of the last princes of Powys.

Far down upon our left hand, over billowy waves of silver-tinted fern, where herds of deer are feeding, the Ceiriog plunges merrily through woodland glades. Upon our right, and before us, the open park sweeps gradually upwards to where, rising above their terraced gardens, are the grey feudal towers erected, in part at any rate, by Roger Mortimer, one of the foremost of those great barons who assisted Edward in the

final conquest of Wales. Fitzalans, Mowbrays, Beauchamps, Nevilles, Stanleys, and finally the royal Tudors, in the shape of Henry VII himself, became lords in turn of this historic and commanding fortress till the ancestor of the Myddleton Biddulphs, as we have seen, stepped into its possession by purchase in the sixteenth century.

Cromwell, resenting the recusancy from his cause of this same Myddelton, was anxious to dismantle the castle, but mercifully some stroke of fortune preserved it to its owners—and to the nation — though so sadly battered by the cannon of the Commonwealth that the enormous sum for those days of £30,000 was expended in its repair. Its feudal dignity is well maintained, for after climbing up a stone staircase from the moat and following the domestic, who answers to a deep clanging bell, through narrow passages, you find yourself in a great quadrangle, round which is ranged every stage of the castle's architecture from the earliest to the last. We must not pause to note in detail the many noble chambers through which the visitor, walking warily over polished, slippery floors, is free to pick his way: nor to linger over the innumerable treasures and curios therein contained, nor the portraits of brave men and women fair or otherwise, but mostly of a celebrity much more than local, hanging upon the walls. Royal Stuarts are there, together with William and Mary and the two Ormondes and the Countess of Warwick, who married Addison, and Myddeltons galore, and a host of worthies but little less renowned—and some who were renowned but could hardly be entitled worthy, such for instance as Mistress Nell Gwynne, who figures here in two characters.

But the pride of the house is the exquisite cabinet, inlaid with silver and rare artistic work, which Charles II gave Sir Thomas Myddelton in recognition of his tardy but active loyalty, but above all probably of his losses: a masterpiece of workmanship that is said to have cost his Majesty, or some one, £10,000. By way of contrast and the extreme of severity

and simplicity in style, the visitor may gaze on Cromwell's hat and hat-box, to say nothing of a really interesting collection of Civil War equipments. There is a farcical picture too, above the stairway, famous throughout North Wales, though by no means painted with any humorous intention. This is no less than a full canvas representation in oils of Pistyll Rhaiadr, a waterfall in the heart of the Montgomery mountains, with a considerable navy in full sail at its foot. It was painted by a Frenchman, and the story goes that, when completed, the very appropriate suggestion was made to the artist by a local Welshman that a few "sheeps" would make a good finishing touch to the picture, which was being executed to order. The Frenchman, wondering no doubt at the license which British art allowed itself, took, as he thought, the friendly hint, and produced the masterpiece in question.

But for long ages before Roger Mortimer planted the Norman power—for it is absurd to talk about these conquerors of Wales as Englishmen—so irrevocably upon this high green ridge, there had rested here another and no doubt more vulnerable stronghold, known as Crogen. Here Powys lords and princes had come and gone for generations in the thick of the long turmoil of border warfare. But chief of all there was fought—just here upon the Ceiriog and around Offa's dyke, which runs across the Park—a memorable battle between Henry II and Owen Gwynedd, Prince of North Wales and Suzerain of all Wales. The battle of Crogen stands out as one of the great conflicts in the long resistance the Welsh offered to the Normans, for Owen Gwynedd, by the power of his name, had succeeded in uniting all Wales beneath his banners, a greater testimony to commanding character in those days than even victory itself. "Prince Owen," says the old historian, "was there with his brother Cadwallader and all the strength of North Wales; Prince Rhys with that of South Wales, Owen Ceifeilioc and Madoc ap Meredith with all the power of Powys.' Henry had vowed vengeance on Wales and destruction to every

living Welsh thing. He advanced here by way of Oswestry, bringing with him a motley host of English, Normans, Gascons, Flemings and companies from Anjou and Guienne, and after the fashion of invaders of Wales in those days, had before him thousands of wood-cutters clearing the forests for his slow and timid advance.

Owen, however, came out to face him, and the two armies met down yonder upon the Ceiriog. A long and fierce combat raged, resulting in the retreat of the Welsh across the Berwyn Mountains to Corwen, followed by Henry, where later in this book we shall find the two armies standing facing one another across the Dee. The King's life, it is said, was only saved by the gallantry of Hubert de Clare, Constable of Chester, who threw himself before his master in the nick of time and received in his stead the fatal wound. The heaps of slain found a fitting and significant grave in the hollow trenches of Offa's dyke whose course may be here plainly seen.

It is quite a noteworthy physical feature, the fashion in which this deep vale of the Ceiriog drives through the high bordering hills into the heart of Wales. Shoulder behind shoulder comes tumbling down a thousand feet or more to the narrow riband of meadows, through which the joyous little river, hidden behind screens of alders and willows, makes merry music. Welsh life, fed by quarries among the hills, as well as agriculture, hums quietly in thrifty villages, and grows no whit more English because a light railroad and a level turnpike bring it in ready contact with the English plains. It is hardly too much to say that one side of Chirk Castle is as Welsh for every practical purpose as Anglesey; the other as English as Worcestershire. Upon the one side people can speak, after a fashion, two languages, but they only do speak and always think in Welsh. Upon the other few could be found who even understand the latter language, though a slight Welsh intonation trenches far over the Shropshire border from north to south. Such a sharp cleavage in dialect and sentiment may

no doubt be found in many outlying parts of Europe, or even upon the further fringes of what may relatively be called barbarism in the West of Scotland or Ireland. But surely these are in no sense to be compared for significance with this Anglo-Welsh border, for life upon the whole beats here with a quicker pulse than, let us say, in Dorsetshire or Suffolk. The throb of the industrial north can be heard without much straining of the ears; the smoke of chimneys and the flare of furnaces is often unhappily too obvious; the busiest seaport of England, the objective point of nearly all travelling and trading America, is almost within sight, and within less than an hour by train. Nor are these people who thus persistently reject the English tongue Basques, or Bretons, or Highland crofters or Connemara bog-trotters, but Britons in the very highway of Anglo-Saxon materialism, progression and prosperity, and take a full share in such blessings as these things may, or may not, confer. It is surely and of a truth a wonderful thing, the like of which can nowhere else be seen.

We cannot undertake it here, but it would be worth any one's while to run up the admirable and level road that threads the valley of the Ceiriog, so far at any rate as Llansaintffraid or Glyn —some half-a-dozen miles—after which the road, though still excellent, plunges into narrower mountain gorges, and ends virtually in a *cul-de-sac* at the village of Llanarmon. Near Glyn Ceiriog, at a farmhouse called Pont y Meibion, abutting on the road, lived one of the greatest of Welsh bards, Huw Morris. He was born in the reign of James the First, and lived to see Queen Anne upon the throne. A violent Royalist, he devoted his pen wholly to that cause, though like many other sensible people, the doings of the second James so disgusted him, that in later life he attuned his muse in homage to Dutch William and the inoffensive lady who succeeded him. Huw used to worship at Llansilin church, over behind the great hump of Selattyn Hill yonder, and he lies buried there, beneath the old yew-trees which shade the little churchyard. George

Borrow paid a special visit to his grave, and taking off his hat, he tells us he "went down upon hands and knees and kissed the cold slab covering the cold remains of the mighty Huw, the greatest songster of the 17th century." In such honour was Huw held in his old age that the parson, who in those days was accustomed to head the rustic congregation in solemn procession out of church, gave place invariably to the famous poet, when he was present: an honour surely more touching and significant than titles and pensions could confer! Huw Morris has commemorated the glorious hospitalities of the Chirk of his day—and his day was that of the first Myddeltons—in a notable Welsh stanza. "If Cefn Ucha"—a neighbouring hill—he sings, "was all bread, and the Ceiriog ran ale instead of water, the former would have disappeared and the latter would have run dry before half a year had passed."

But we must back to the village and our highway, though by no means passing a second time without notice the great lodge gates of wrought and hammered iron, which were brought hither in the days of William of Orange, and are the delight of experts in such workmanship. Conspicuous among the devices which here confront us is the Wolf of the Myddeltons, as ubiquitous almost as the Tudor rose and the "Pen Sais" in Welsh heraldry, and derived from a remote ancestor named Raryd, who for his ferocity in war was as distinguished as Blaidd or the Wolf. Passing the station there is a pretty glimpse of the canal with its wooded banks. Passenger boats, drawn briskly by horses, ply upon it between here and Llangollen, crossing the wonderful aqueduct, built a century ago, over the Dee valley by Telford, a performance greatly calculated to upset the equanimity of the timid or the uninitiated. For the boat entirely fills the narrow channel, and thus hovers in mid-air for many hundred yards at a dizzy height above the world below, which hereabouts is a dream of beauty.

But we must travel to Llangollen, not in this lazy fashion, but by the Holyhead road, and resisting all temptations to loiter

among the bowery gardens of the *Hand*, we will mount our iron steeds and head for that still more famous, but less picturesque, hostelry of the same name, which stands in the narrow streets of Llangollen.

It is a fine highway this, as good as any in the kingdom, and for two or three miles we may as well do it justice, for there is not much outlook to arrest the attention upon either side.

But it is far different as we swing round the high shoulder below Pen y Craig, where in similar fashion as the Ceiriog, but on an infinitely greater scale, the Dee valley, broad and beautiful, seems to open out Wales in very truth indeed. We seem here at least really entering the Principality,[1] and by a noble gateway. But even now we must turn our eyes back for a moment from the fascination of the wild array of mountains that in the distance seem as if they must close our westward path. For it would never do to pass by, without some word at any rate of recognition, such a famous seat as Wynnstay, spreading as it does its woods and parklands over the low ridges within such easy sight of us.

The house itself stands out in princely and commanding fashion, but is not half a century old, its predecessor having been destroyed by fire. Everybody knows, of course, there have been "Sir Watkins" here since time was, and I suppose if one wished to give a foreign student of our social system a leading instance of its intricacies and apparent contradictions, the position in Wales, of "the lord of Wynnstay," not as a man, but simply as "Sir Watkin," though a mere baronet, would form an admirable subject. These particular Wynns were of the house of Gwydir, of which I shall have much to say later on. They began to reign at Wynnstay, till then called Wattstay.

[1] It is very generally forgotten that the Principality of Wales only included those portions of the country of which the last native Princes died possessed—the remainder and larger portion of Wales with contiguous strips of what are now English counties being known as the marches.

before the middle of the last century, and their glory culminated, perhaps, in the last squire, whose familiar sobriquet of "Prince in Wales" speaks for itself. Long may there be great commoners in Britain to make a modern peerage seem of poor account, and to confuse the inquiring foreigner.

I do not know, however, that any of the successive Sir Watkins did anything of national moment, unless it was the one who took his Yeomanry Corps of "Ancient Britons" over to Ireland, and rendered conspicuous assistance in quelling the unhappy rebellion of '98. A cenotaph rises above the deep dell of Nant-y-Bele (the dingle of the Marten), through which the Dee rushes with much impetuosity, commemorating the officers and men who fell in that horrid tragedy and left their bones upon Irish soil. One half of the chroniclers of '98 dwell with much indignation on the zeal with which Sir Watkin's Welshmen applied the pitch cap and played "croppies, lie down"; while the other side, with equal insistence, applaud their valour and their loyalty. At any rate, they stood in the breach at a great crisis when few could be spared to stand there, and it is not strange that the memory of this remarkable adventure still lingers among the old people of the Denbigh border, for in spite of occasional pretensions to the contrary by the politicians of either country, there is mighty little love lost between the Shamrock and the Leek.

We have now fairly set our faces westward, and are bowling up the Dee valley towards Llangollen, whose wild fantastic hills fill the sky but three or four miles beyond us. But, though ascending the valley, our road itself is in fact steadily and persistently descending, so high up the hill-side was it when we turned the corner of the vale. Dear to the hearts of the drivers of the old Holyhead mail was this three miles of gentle downward slope over a perfect road, with fresh horses waiting them at the foot of it—in the yard of the Hand Hotel, at Llangollen. Many a timid outside fare saw little, I'll warrant, of one of the finest views in Wales as the coach



Wynstay and Ruabon.

rocked behind the smoking team; and time lost between Whittington and Chirk was being picked up at little cost but to the nerves of fearful passengers.

With much less commotion, we in our end-of-the-century fashion might do, perhaps, even better than the mail coach: and that by simply putting up our feet and keeping our eyes upon the road ahead. But that absorbing and ecstatic pastime will not do here if any pleasure is to be derived from the beauteous landscape that lies spread out beneath and before us.

Ruabon, with its fiery furnaces and belching chimneys, clustering on its steep hills across the vale, a horrid eyesore of modern growth, is happily soon past, and the busy hum of Acrfair gives place to the green uplands of Trevor, whence sprung that famous border family of whom I have already spoken and shall speak again. The great ridges upon both sides of the valley trend steadily upwards towards the Berwyn mountains. Between their feet spreads the valley of the Dee, a half-mile flat of glowing meadow lands and corn fields, through which the broad and noble stream, laden with the burden of a thousand mountain rills, comes bursting out of inner Wales. Even finer still, perhaps, is this particular bit in August, when the golden flare of harvest glows upon these rich flats and shines amid the varying greens of the meadows and the woods, and the purple heather of the nearer hills, and the blue of the remoter mountains, and the silver of the stream. But it is beautiful enough in June, and over all too soon, for linger as we may, a certain speed down a descent so facile is almost unconsciously achieved, and we find ourselves creeping in circumspect fashion round the sharp corners and through the grey and narrow streets of old Llangollen.

CHAPTER III

LLANGOLLEN

"A POOR town" is the verdict recorded by most of the old travellers, who in the days of the Georges, rumbled in their post-chaises, or ambled astride of their saddle-bags into the tortuous alleys of low-browed, grey houses which constituted the Llangollen of that day.

An unreasonableness in this particular seems to distinguish so many of those who wrote delightfully and with conspicuous good sense upon others. This was the first generation upon whom the light had dawned that mountains had any qualities but such as were calculated to inspire horror and aversion, or that a turbulent pellucid stream was other than a poor thing compared with a meandering, reedy Midland brook. People had just begun, in fact, to look upon with rapture and to write of with a fresh and genuine sympathy the glories of mountain and moorland. But even as late as the beginning of this reign many of them, when they descended into the valley, were apt to be querulous if they were not received into the bosom of a smug, low-country market town—an Aylesbury, shall we say, or a Bishop Stortford?—lying under the shadow of the Berwyn hills or in the lap of Snowdon.

It would be ill requiting, however, the pleasure that some of

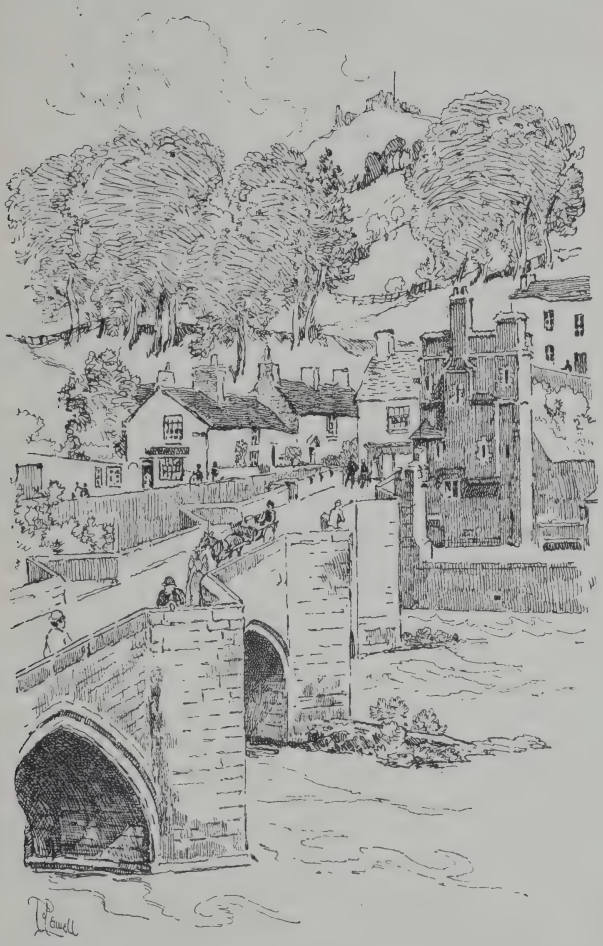
these old pioneers have given us in the reading of their simple adventures amid regions now so accessible by such quibbling as this. They were following Arthur Young or Pennant, perhaps, who did the practical side as well as the other one so capably. At any rate, they would, I think, be much less severe upon modern Llangollen, though we ourselves would be perhaps inclined to linger for choice among what is left of this "poor town." A few lanes, that is to say, of old cottages, leading inconsequently upward, but at an angle of forty-five degrees, and to no goal in particular, that cannot nowadays be otherwise achieved with less discomfort and more despatch: not much, it is true; and what there is, besides the mere pathos of age, to hold the imagination in a spot so lovely depends on the works of God, not of man. For it is wonderful what a setting these steep gables and grey moss grown roofs contrive, when you focus them from below at the right angle, for the glorious crags and hanging woods which have made Llangollen so famous a place, and so justly famous. As a matter of fact, dear reader, unless, perhaps, I had you with me, I will be quite candid and confess that I should not go in search of any of these gems of landscape, but should almost certainly drop into a quiet cottage just short of them where a gilt perch hanging from an impossible rod proclaims with ridiculous inappropriateness the sanctum of the veteran salmon-slayer, coraclist, rod-maker, and fly-tier of all the Dee Valley. I would not however ask you to linger with me there and watch the old man tying salmon flies or March browns or varnishing top joints while he yarns of the twenty-pounder he had the night before in the willow pool, or of how the river swarmed with trout in the halcyon days before the railway came—before most of us, that is to say, were born. I should not have ventured to be so parenthetical at all if it were not for the recollection of a young lady-artist from London whom accident made my companion on the very last occasion on which I made a business visit to old John Roberts. For here

is no conventional tackle shop, with a plate-glass window and a counter, but an old Welsh cottage parlour with a low oak ribbed ceiling, and walls two feet thick, and a huge chimney and a deep-set window. Through this I remember the westering sun of a summer afternoon shone with a subdued but singular effect, lighting up the grey-headed old man, busy among his silks and feathers and dubbing, and making wonderful work with glint and shadow upon oak settles and polished bits of brass work and all sorts of quaint odds and ends in wood and china, to say nothing of the good dame herself knitting by the fireside to round off the unconsciously artistic picture with the requisite touch of domestic peace. My business lies mostly with "exteriors"; but this "interior" would have appealed, I think, to any one. At any rate, my young artist declared with much enthusiasm that, if she could have had access to it but for a week at it, her fortune was made. It was quite with reluctance we had to confess that the soul of John Roberts soared above models, even if so public a character and so industrious a household could have brought themselves to pose for the necessary period.

This it is perhaps needless to say belongs to the older part of the town so contemptuously dismissed by our Georgian travellers. As a matter of fact, Llangollen is happily yet but little more than a large village. There is nothing to be said either good or particularly bad of the rebuilding of its chief portion which the exigencies of increasing travel made long ago necessary. There is not enough of it to encroach upon the exquisite beauty of the fairyland amid which it lies. The demand for accommodation is intermittent. At Easter and Whitsuntide the Northern and Midland towns, for a few days at each festival, burst into the vale, and the inhabitants of Llangollen sleep on the floor or walk about all night to make room for them. Before and after these orgies a profound peace, or one unbroken, at any rate, by any discordant note, unless indeed

the passing "ting" of the bicycle bell be one, reigns over hill and dale; while even its single wide street of shops and chapels is not much more animated than an average Midland market-town, save when a train-load of trippers have unhappily been dumped out there. In the August holidays I need not say there is a visible rise in the population; traps and even the fearsome char-à-banc invade the leafy lanes; while down at the railway-station, as is only natural, being on a great highway to the West coast, heavily-weighted trains congested with perspiring people go labouring slowly towards the ocean and the setting sun.

But this is not the sort of thing we came to Llangollen to talk about; nor is it thus it comes to me in dreams, nor would I choose such conditions in which to introduce a reader to a spot that is not for the greater part of the year much trodden by strangers. The fact is I have been unconsciously shirking the task that it would seem I have set myself, that of attempting some sort of a pen picture of a region to which I have ventured again and again to apply the uncompromising and perhaps inadmissible epithet of "matchless." But there is some respite yet. For before going out amid woods and mountains that would afford new rambles and new beauties every long day of a summer month—and let that be June—there is a word or two yet to be said concerning the "poor town" of Llangollen that has no reference to bank-holidays or trippers. The bridge, for instance, borne by five stone arches across the noble river, and built in the fifteenth century by Bishop Trevor of St. Asaph, —the first stone bridge in Wales, and for long one of the wonders of the Principality. Like some other old monopolists, however, it has suffered considerably during the last three or four centuries from competition, and nowhere perhaps found more formidable rivals than upon its own sacred stream. However that may be, I know of no town whose very heart is so shaken and which palpitates so visibly with the humours of



Llangollen Bridge.

a turbulent mountain river as Llangollen. Says old Churchyard, who wrote much of this country, in his crabbed verse, in the reign of Elizabeth—

> "The toune is near the goodly river Dee
> That underneath a bridge of stone doth pass,
> And still on rocke the water runs, you see,
> A wondrous way, a thing full rare and strange.
> That rocke cannot the course of water change,
> For in the stream huge stones and rockes remayne
> That backward it might the flood of force constrayne."

As a matter of fact the main street of the town is lifted over the river by the bridge, and terminates in the railway station at the other side. So it is no wonder that the pulse of Llangollen—open-air Llangollen, at any rate—beats strongest above the cheery music of the stream. Let us foregather there for a moment with the loafers and gossips, not in a dry spell, though even then there is commotion enough in the river bed, but when storms have been lashing the sides of the Merioneth mountains and a south-west wind beating the white breakers on Bala Lake into the corner whence issues the greatest of North Welsh rivers. It is a noble sight. The rocks, whose immobility stirred the imagination of old Churchyard three hundred years ago, have not budged a foot. The fierce river still rages impotently against them in sheets of foam, and, laden with the surplus waters of a hundred mountain streams and countless rills, roars like a mad thing through the immutable arches of Bishop Trevor's bridge. It does indeed much more than this, for it leaps high up against the very walls behind which Llangollen citizens are eating their dinners, or are busy over their ledgers, or serving out refreshment to quench the thirst of what unkind gossip says is one of the thirstiest places in North Wales.

Here, amid much that is new, are still one or two landmarks of old Llangollen. Yonder, for instance, with the river beating its walls, is the "Royal Hotel"—altered a good deal since Daniel

O'Connell toasted his toes at its cheerful hearth and wrote verses in the visitors' book. Beyond it again, in a side-street, is the old "Hand," singularly undistinguished in appearance and even unpicturesque for one of the most famous hostelries in North Wales. And with the mention of it the figure of General Yorke springs into mind, now these many years dead—for from any memories of the place that of the General is inseparable. Bearer of a name famous in Welsh antiquarian lore, he owned Plâs Newydd, the architectural show *par excellence* of Llangollen town, and spent the evening of his days in keeping green the memory of his predecessors in the quaint black-and-white mansion. All the world has heard of the two Old Maids of Llangollen; and the General, who, after a long interval, succeeded to their picturesque habitation above the village, took a pretty fancy for keeping it as a museum instead of a residence, retaining the treasures of the old ladies and adding many of his own. The genial old gentleman lived at the "Hand" for years, going backwards and forwards daily to his beloved Plâs Newydd, and showing its treasures to anybody and everybody who chose to turn in there. As for the old maids themselves, all the world, as I said before, has heard of them. People to whose ears such names as Madoc ap Gryffyth or Bishop Trevor or Iolo Goch, or Myfanwy Fychan, or even Jenny Jones, are as empty sounds are familiar, if in vague fashion, with the fact of these queer old Irishwomen's existence.

The ladies, at any rate, bore illustrious names, and came of the two families, that more than almost any others perhaps, have contributed to the making of Irish history, whatever merit there may be in that not very creditable chronicle. It seems that this Lady Eleanor Butler and her friend Miss Ponsonby, while still in the bloom of youth, and in the inner circle of that brilliant society for which the Irish capital towards the close of the last century was famous, were seized with a sudden and simultaneous fancy to renounce the pomps and vanities of life. Whether one or both had been crossed in

love history does not say. But at any rate it appears that they united together in a solemn abjuration of all thoughts of matrimony and a solemn vow of perpetual friendship. With the double view apparently of putting all temptation to break their vow out of reach, and of submitting their oath of everlasting friendship to the severest test, they left their native country and ancestral homes, and settled in what seemed to them the romantic seclusion of the vale of Llangollen. We must admit their constancy, for they lived in the black-and-white house already noticed, and which they mostly built, till they were carried out of it feet foremost as quite old women after the century had well passed its first quarter. They had good means, and distributed coals and blankets, I believe, with commendable liberality to the poor. The very humble and the very great, we are told, most loved them. This looks as if they snubbed the neighbourhood. At any rate, no susceptible Welsh squire succeeded in turning them from the rigid path they had marked out. Perhaps, if the truth were told, the temptation was not great—to the Welsh squires, I mean. Save for the fact that they dressed themselves more or less like men in later life, they do not seem to have been distinguished for anything particular except a taste for curios and lions.

Their liking for the latter gives a gleam of interest to two somewhat colourless personalities, since living on the highway between Dublin and London they were able to indulge their fancy. The Duke of Wellington, naturally, both as an Irishman of their set, and connected with Brynkinallt, came here too. Scott and Wordsworth both visited at Plâs Newydd on their Welsh tours and were probably patronised. A funny story is told of the latter, which suggests that these excellent old ladies had lost the sense of humour which every Hibernian of that period, at any rate, brought into the world with him. Possibly, however, they were freaks of nature and were born without it, which would be entirely sufficient to account for their early flight from their native land. But to return

to Wordsworth, it seems to have been an understood thing that every stranger of distinction, who visited the ladies should contribute some curio to their collection. The Lake poet however overlooked this little matter, and subscribed some verses instead, which all may read. Such an offering in itself might have done well enough; but, unhappily, he referred to their villa at Llangollen in poetic metaphor as a "lowly cot by Deva's banks." The ladies, tradition says, bridled greatly at this, and poor Wordsworth dropped entirely out of favour. Or is it possible that the poet, knowing their little weakness, was poking fun at them after all? Hardly, I take it. Whatever the Rydal bard may have been, I fancy most of us are agreed that he was not a jester. But enough of this and the Old Maids of Llangollen! I have done my duty towards them—indeed I fear I have exceeded it.

What indeed can be said of the outlook from Llangollen, or, better still, from some point lifted just above the village, it matters little where? Unlike the vales of Edeyrnion of the Clwyd, or the Conway, or other notable Welsh valleys, where a single wall drops down abruptly upon either hand, this one of the Dee, just here at Llangollen, is more of a horseshoe in its shape. Lofty hills and mountains seem to bound the near horizon upon every side in something of a circle, with a cleft in the sky-line on the English side alone, where the Dee goes racing off towards Ruabon. Within this outer circle of greater and more imposing heights lies heaped in picturesque confusion a mass of lower ones, aglow with every colour that wood and meadow, grey crags or blazing gorse-brakes, warm-tinted fallows, or tender grain crops yet in their lush leaf, can give back to the sunlight of early June. As for the encircling hills which hold in their embrace these few miles of fairy-land, where are we to begin?

Not anywhere in the world, surely, do mountains that in no case quite reach 2,000 feet make such an imposing show! Behind us to the south rises the great shoulder which divides

the valley of the Dee from the scarcely less romantic gorges of the Ceiriog. It is only some 1,200 feet above us, but is wooded to the summit, which gives it much distinction. West of the woods a high-road climbs it, with as little regard to gradients as a Devonshire lane, and plunges down the other side into Glyn Ceiriog with absolutely none. The best practical joke I have ever seen in the way of a finger-post is one that introduces you to it hard by Llangollen, and informs you, in the dry and laconic fashion of finger-posts, that it is three miles to Glyn-Ceiriog—which place, I should remark, is an object of frequent pilgrimage. The best, or the worst, of the joke is that the statement is perfectly veracious, and the road itself is an excellent one. The alternative for those on wheels is to go round by Chirk, a distance of thirteen miles. When therefore it has been said that this alternative is almost invariably chosen, the nature of what I believe to be the most perpendicular three miles of genuine high-road in Great Britain may perhaps be imagined. I often think how that old sign-post must crack its wooden sides with laughter as some merry carriage full of tourists or light-hearted party of cyclists from a far country take it seriously and turn the innocent-looking corner.

Following westward from the southern barrier of the vale, Moel-y-Geraint rears its isolated head. And continuing the circle at a higher altitude, but a greater distance, the bold peaks of Morfydd and Gamelin push their lofty shoulders round to meet the broken ridges, which, scarcely drooping at the high pass of Bwlch Mawr, effectually close the northern sky-line. These in their turn give way to wonderful limestone cliffs, which, travelling south-eastward for four miles, complete the investment of this enchanting spot. It has been justly said by many scores of travellers that this Llangollen region is more truly "Alpine" than any upon such a comparatively small scale within common knowledge. The fantastic and bold shapes into which volcanic action has thrown the vale

and its sentinels, make you beyond a doubt oblivious to surveyors' measurements; and the Eglwyseg cliffs, with the rich and marvellous hues, springing, moreover, as they do, for so many miles out of a wealth of verdure, to the respectable height of some fourteen or fifteen hundred feet, present a spectacle, beyond a doubt, almost unique in British landscape.

Comparisons are odious. But I have no patience with your gentleman who has suffered his better senses to be obscured by snow-peaks, who talks with gentle patronage of Snowdon, and looks at the Vale of Conway from a Pontresina point of view! To such I would say take your ice and snow by all means, but what have you beneath them in comparison with such things as we have here? Where, for instance, out of Britain would you see such a blend of rugged nature with the refinement of a mellow and perfected country life? Above all, where such an atmosphere, not, it is true, for sitting under vines and fig-trees, but for giving glamour and mystery to scenes, that even physically, owe something of their beauty to its mellow, moistening presence?

Fern-clad dingles are all about us, musical with gurgling rills, and sunny glades, gay with gorse-brakes, and hawthorn blooms, go climbing up the base of the bigger mountains. Mantling woods of oak, and ash, and sycamore, give way as they ascend, to sheep pastures of emerald turf, where feathery birch-trees throw tremulous shadows, and white gleams of limestone rock, cropping out here and there upon the slopes, prepare the eye for the bold crags above. The charm of Llangollen, as, indeed of all Wales, lies in its contrasts. For here, in the valley and foothills, are ancient homesteads slumbering beneath the shade of forest trees that would do credit to regions that have nothing else to boast of but their timber. Here too, deep lanes, winding between banks of ferns and flowers, lead you past cottages and hamlets whose picturesque construction is in perfect harmony with the spirit

of their surroundings—and this is saying much indeed. It is not only cottages and farm-houses however, with their low walls of stone, brightly dashed with colour or half hidden in creepers, that are a feature in the Llangollen landscape. It would be strange enough if for the last half-century such a place had been entirely overlooked by the class who have covered some parts of England and the north coast of Wales with country houses of discordant shapes. This neighbourhood has, I think, in this respect been singularly favoured. The millionaire has practically left it untouched, and the less ambitious people who have here furbished up a decaying farmhouse, or there built an unobtrusive, or even tasteful cottage, have, upon the whole, perhaps rather contributed than otherwise to that singular charm of variety and of contrast and of peace that distinguishes, to my mind, the Vale of Llangollen above all vales within my knowledge.

But I have said nothing yet of what is the very eye and heart of the famous valley—the weird-looking and high-perched ruins of Dinas Brân. It is difficult to imagine anything more imposing and more invincible than the situation occupied by these rugged relics of Cambrian independence. Feudal fragments upon hill tops are common enough in Wales and elsewhere in Britain ; but surely few others stand alone amid the clouds, in such grim and uncompromising defiance, as those splintered walls that gave refuge to the last Princes of Powys.

For immediately above the village, and in the middle of the valley, an isolated, cone-shaped hill springs sharply upward to a height of nearly eight hundred feet. Upon its narrow crown, bidding a seemingly eternal defiance to time and storms, these savage and fang-like fragments of prehistoric masonry stand poised in such fashion as to recall the most weird efforts of Gustave Doré's pencil, or the robbers' castle of one's childish dreams. It is a wonderful feature from any point. From some, where the angle of the sugar-loaf hill is sharpest and the ruins



Dinas Brân.

are outlined against the sky, I know nothing of its kind anywhere in these islands to compare with it. It is one of the few strongholds of North Wales whose origin is too remote for even the long memories of Welshmen. Named after a King of the 6th century, as is generally supposed, it is with the long struggle rather of the Welsh against the Norman power in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries one likes to connect it, and to think of the heroes of border story, ay, and of kings too, who in turn held or feared it. Away down the Dee valley, and far into England on the one hand, deep into the heart of Wales upon the other, the eye can freely range from its grass-grown ramparts A few faggots kindled upon Dinas Brân would in a trice have had all Powys and half Shropshire in arms. What an outlook, too, it is from here! But we have had enough of mere landscape. Let us think rather of what a site it stands on—in one of the very gates of Wales; and what this meant before the 14th century few of us attempt or care to realise. Few, at any rate, remember how the Saxons for full three centuries before the Norman Conquest—and the warlike Mercians at that—were flinging themselves upon these Northern Marches with tireless energy, and flinging themselves for the most part, be it remembered, in vain. What tides of battle have rolled backwards and forwards through the now smiling and joyous vale below! What generations of men have fought and fallen within easy sight of the watchers from this aerial parapet! What sights these old walls have seen—what tales they could tell if their rude stones could speak!

It was this Powys, this middle kingdom of Wales, that first began to flinch and temporise and crumble before the terrible Norman power which had laid all England prostrate, even to the Marches, in seven years. And this is no wonder, for the base of its triangular territory lay along the border, whereas North and South Wales, or Gwynedd and Deheubarth, lay just the other way, being each, in their turn too, something of a triangle, their points towards England and their bases over

against the Irish Sea. The vitality of the two larger kingdoms therefore beat highest in regions comparatively remote, while that of Powys, on the other hand, came in immediate contact with the Norman power. This, speaking in round numbers, they defied for over a hundred years before the dissolution set in, which again was long enough before it became an accomplished fact.

I must not however force the dry bones of Welsh history too insistently on my reader now I have button-holed him on the top of Dinas Brân. But in the splendid fight which the Welsh made for over two centuries with the power that had prostrated England almost at one blow, it is a salient and easily remembered fact that Mid-Wales lost its unity and virtually its independence a hundred years before North and South had wholly and finally relinquished theirs. There was probably no better fighting material in all Wales than the men of Montgomery, Southern Denbigh, and Eastern Merioneth, and the Princes of Powys were mighty lords; but Norman blandishments sometimes succeeded where Norman arms had failed. There was nothing in the world more natural, when two or three scions of the princely stock were disputing—as all Welsh princes disputed—the succession, and in the usual strenuous fashion, than that the Norman Lords Marchers across the border should join in the fray, and be gladly welcomed as allies by one party or the other. When the difficulty was over, the foreigner, as was only fair, had his reward. This generally took the shape of land, or maybe the hand of an heiress, which was very much the same thing in the end.

At any rate, before Edward the First completed the conquest of Wales, Powys—though its commons, as they are to this day in a racial sense, were then in a fiercer one, uncompromising Welshmen—was greatly split up in rulership. There was still however a prince in Powys in the year 1200. I will not trouble my reader with the exact nature of his tenure or the

precise limits of his power, but only with his name, which was Madoc ap Gryffyth Maelor. As a matter of fact, Powys had fallen in half; the lower or larger portion known as Powys Fadog then belonging to another great chieftain bearing the euphonious name of Gwenwynwyn ap Owen Cyfeilioc. This warrior started his career with the romantic notion of reconquering that strip of old Wales in Shropshire and Hereford which, by virtue of Saxon conquests and Norman occupation, had been English for four hundred years. He was defeated with the loss of 3,700 men. Later on, when Llewelyn the Great, having practically extirpated the English power in Wales, demanded from Gwenwynwyn that homage which Powis and South Wales had always paid to a strong King of Gwywedd, his personal pride, as was common enough, outweighed the Quixotic patriotism that had distinguished him earlier, and he refused. Llewellyn however was irresistible, and Gwenwynwyn, who had already begun to parley with the Normans, was brought into line, and proved a doughty champion of the Welsh cause, and a trusted ally of the great son of Iorwerth. But the air of Powis had become hopelessly tainted with treason, and before Gwenwynwyn died we find him in full alliance with the Normans. All this would be inexcusably parenthetical but for the fact that Madoc ap Gryffyth, the junior partner, so to speak, in the domain of Powys, had followed his senior's fortunes, and, as Lord of Yale and Bromfield, found Dinas Brân an invaluable point of refuge between the upper and the nether millstones of Welsh and Norman vengeance.

All Britain however should be for ever grateful to this undoubtedly valiant prince for the beautiful abbey of Langwestle, or Valle Crucis, which he built and endowed beneath his stronghold, and whither our steps will be shortly bent. His dust lies there, and likewise that of his son Gryffyth, who died in 1270 in the very height of the last desperate war which Llewelyn's less able but not less heroic grandson carried on against Henry the Third and Edward the First. This last of the great Powys

chieftains, of whom we must speak again, was more of a trimmer in politics even than his father, and must have found the security of Dinas Brân simply invaluable. He was the great-great-grandfather of Owen Glyndwr who, whatever his faults, must have much more than atoned for the not wholly inexcusable shortcomings of his ancestors in this particular respect. The tradition that Glyndwr destroyed the castle can hardly be correct, for the last echoes of vitality that belong to the grim old ruin tell of love, not of war. And these come down to us from days just after the death of the hero, when the Trevors lived in proud pomp upon this giddy and still embattled pinnacle, and the daughter of the house, Myfanwy, was by her rare beauty breaking all the hearts in Powys-land. Gutyn Owen, a noted bard of that period, who lived in the valley below, has told us in a long poem of impassioned verses of the havoc she had wrought in his susceptible breast. In a translation, much of the Welsh poet's fervour is no doubt lost, but even thus mutilated something of his state of mind may be guessed—and of the lady's charms—from a few stanzas selected from his ode.

"The winds around thy towers may rave,
But there I roam thy form to see,
As brilliant as the dangerous wave
That murmurs o'er Caswennon's sea.

"My steed impatient paws the ground,
He has no path but where thou art;
He looks with restless glance around
And waits my signal to depart.

"My song shall tell the world how bright
Is she who robs my soul of rest—
As fair her face, all smiles and light,
As snow new-fallen on Aran's crest.

"In scarlet robes, with queenly gait,
Thou comest, and all before thee kneel.
I see thee, and I curse my fate;
New torments and new love I feel.

"Yet little care by thee is shown
For lays that others prize as dear;
By all besides my fame is known,
All others flock my harp to hear.

"Ah, bid me sing, as well I can,
Nor scorn my melody as vain,
Or 'neath the walls of Dinas Brân
Behold me perish in my pain!"

As "Brán" in Welsh signifies a crow, the old ruin is cockneyfied by the tourist and some of his caterers into "Crow Castle," which is both inaccurate and irreverent. Leland tells us it was a battered ruin in his day, and that a pair of eagles were accustomed to build there every spring. It may well have been the Welsh ruin which so appealed to Wordsworth during his sojourn in this region—

"Relic of kings, wreck of forgotten wars,
To the winds abandoned and the prying stars."

But we must turn our backs on Dinas Brân and bend our steps towards what is left of the splendid abbey, which its owners built, and where so many of them lie, besides others of scarcely less note who had no part or parcel in that aerial fortress, and perhaps no cause to love it. We must bid adieu to Llangollen; and at the same time I would urgently entreat no visitor to that delightful spot to pass it over in such light fashion as space compels me here to do with my pen. For a week of summer days, spent busily afoot, would hardly suffice to open out the exquisite charms in which its immediate neighbourhood abounds.

The Holyhead road is our main route, for another chapter or two at any rate; but Valle Crucis Abbey is on the north side of the Dee, and half a mile up a lateral valley; so, taking for a time the less-trodden road that leaves Llangollen on the same bank, we pass out of the village by the pleasant villas that form its outer fringes. Over strips of rich meadow or green lawns, and through a network of varied foliage, we can see the

white foam of the river making wild work among the rocks. Indeed we are well in its gorge here, for the summit of Moel Geraint seems to hang almost immediately above our heads, and the little white homesteads of the Welsh farmers scattered over its high shoulders glint through the very tree-tops that shade our road. We have shaken the last dust of Llangollen off our feet, but there is another mile at least in which perhaps we may be permitted to let our fancy ramble, however inconsequently, about the place and its memories before other ones demand our whole attention. The fact is, dear old George Borrow has been in my mind ever since we first caught sight of Dinas Brân, and that was near Ruabon. *Wild Wales* is of course nothing like so notable a book as some of his others, the *Bible in Spain* for instance; still, it is after all a classic in its way. Nothing so wholly original has ever been written about Wales, as can be readily understood by any one familiar with his Spanish works. I have read most of the books written by travellers in Wales, from the days of the invaluable Pennant till the beginning of the railroad period, and can only at this moment remember even the names of three or four of them; but the eccentric East Anglian genius is with me at all times. I look for him in the snug corner of wayside inn parlours, criticising his mug of ale, and astonishing a rustic audience with quotations in Suffolk-Welsh from Dafydd ap Gwilym, or Huw Morris, or Tom o' the dingle. I see him trudging over the moorland roads before me, swinging his cotton umbrella and spouting his own translations of Iolo Goch, or pulling up at some lonely cottage and paralysing its simple inmates with his knowledge of their tongue and folk-lore. And yet what an impossible Welshman! Welshmen they knew, and Englishmen, tourists or otherwise, they knew; but who and what was this one? A South-Walian perhaps; but a strange one surely! No? Well, a Breton it must be then from France across the sea—for glimmers of Armorica yet dimly linger among the Welsh peasantry. A Saxon—and a gentleman too



"Criticising his mug of ale"

—talking Welsh ! Oh, the devil ! Such a thing had never been heard of since the world was made ! The spell of Borrow I admit is always over me in Wales. I find myself going out of my way in most absurd fashion to identify farmhouses where nearly fifty years ago that delightfully self-complacent, happy, healthy, keen-witted, observant, egotistic, rhinoceros-hided old gentleman called in Borrovian fashion for a glass of milk. I catch myself hanging over the wall, wondering whether the bent old grey-beard moving stiffly across the yard might peradventure—for Welsh tenants shift but little—be the very one whom as a chubby lad Borrow presented with a penny and a moral axiom.

But of all places Llangollen to my mind most conjures up his image. For it was there he set up his head-quarters for so many weeks ; and thither, after stumping round all Wales, he returned, by no means out of conceit with his first love. I like to picture him on Sunday morning, overflowing with the strong British middle class Pope-hating Protestant propriety of that period, as he stalks up to the porch door of the old church, his wife hanging on one arm and his daughter on the other. Or to fancy him stumping up the big hill to the Ceiriog watershed, with wide-awake hat, macintosh, clump boots, gingham umbrella, and all the rest of it, the faithful henchman plodding along at his side, hired by the week to listen to those moralisings in Welsh which must of a truth have had a strange sound in the ears of the excellent John Jones.

CHAPTER IV

VALLE CRUCIS AND GLYNDYFRDWY

"An abbey near that mountain town there is
Whose walls yet stand, and steeple too likewise.
But who that rides to see the north of this
Shall think he mounts on hills unto the skies;
For when one hill behind your back you see,
Another comes two times as high as he;
And in one place the mountains stand so there
In roundness such as it a cockpit were."

THUS our good friend Churchyard sings of Valle Crucis Abbey as he knew it in the sixteenth century, and makes attempts in more effective than strictly poetic language to tell his readers of the wondrous background of ascending summits that climb up behind it, one above another, to the wild ridges of Yale. A more significant entry, without any pretension to rhyme or elaboration, occurs in the old Welsh Chronicle—"In this year (1200) Madog son of Gruffudd Maelor founded the monastery of Llangwestle, near the Old Cross in Yale." And indeed no monastery was ever founded on a fairer spot than the one whose ruined walls now confront us. For here is a valley pressed in upon every side with wooded hills, yet wide enough to give room for a fair meadow, where ancient trees noisy with rooks harmonise with the still stately relics of the noble pile, and a joyous stream, born far up

behind the Eglwyseg cliffs, and named, like the shattered ruin on the hill, after the father of Caradoc, goes prattling downwards to the Dee.

The tower that Churchyard knew has long fallen; but the east and west gables of the abbey still lift happily their graceful proportions heavenwards. Much of the walls, though loaded like other parts with ivy, are yet standing; so also is the chapter-house, and a considerable portion of the monks' quarters. The latter, for the long period during which most buildings of the kind suffered from neglect, was used as a farm-house. It has now this long time been rescued from such indignities, and has been the loving care of antiquaries, as well as a place of delight to thousands of visitors, who care nothing for archæology, and to whom Welsh history is Sanskrit.

It is not our business here to lift the load of ivy that hangs in festoons from wall and gable, and descant upon the tracery and mouldings that are hidden underneath it; nor to speculate whether this, a purely Welsh building, erected by a Welsh prince, like others of the same origin show traces as some maintain, of local inspiration or any departure from the Anglo-Norman methods of the time. I may however make free to remark what an admirable and unusual thing it is to find a clergyman, and a zealous antiquary to boot, in charge of such a place as this, instead of the usual two-legged machine that spoils the interior of so many historic buildings with its automatic and perfunctory clacking and its keen scent for a tip. Once admitted, you may wander here at will and unimportuned, over the velvet turf that now spreads over the floor of the roofless nave, and listen to the birds singing in the overhanging foliage and the prattle of the stream upon the rocks; or watch the trout rising in the abbey fish-pond; or try and build up again in fancy, if you choose, the broken fabric piece by piece, and fill the chancel once again with tonsured white-robed monks, and the nave with the motley figures of a countryside that spent half its days in war.

Better still, you may join the Reverend Curator and look with him upon the battered tombs of these grim old Princes of Powys and Lords of Dinas Brân, whose wreck we can still see frowning down upon us from its lonely perch. You may ask, as Borrow asked, in vain, for the resting-place of Iolo Goch, though we know he lies here. You may note the groinwork and the arches of the chapter-house, or stroll through the monks' dormitories, or, better still, ask your guide to show you the wonderful stone coffin lids that he has excavated, and which some experts say are possibly a thousand years older than the abbey itself, and of a time prior to British Christianity. Llangwestle, as it was mostly in old times called, was the abbey church of all Powys, and in North Wales second only to the great monastery of Aber Conway, which was so unhappily burnt by English soldiers in the 13th century, with all the priceless chronicles therein contained. As for Valle Crucis, there is no doubt that the terrible discipline of perpetual silence which once distinguished the Cistercian Order had been greatly modified, to put it mildly, by the 15th century. For that same disconsolate lover, Gutyn Owen, who, if it will be remembered, serenaded Myfanwy in such futile and pathetic fashion, was official bard at the Abbey; and he has most woefully betrayed his patrons to a posterity that, but for him and his brother singers, might have been inclined to regard them as uncompromising ascetics.

But numbers of odes by Welsh bards of the 14th and 15th centuries to abbots are extant in the British Museum, and more than a dozen of the lovelorn Gutyn's. That his passion had not spoilt his appetite and that living of the best was to be had at Llangwestle, may be inferred from this translated sample of many verses addressed to its Abbot—

> "Each day would thou produce a banquet new,
> One to us all that might for Christmas count;
> Nor will I baulk thee, David, of to-day,
> But to the house will come, *and early too.*"

Or again—

> "Thy feasts in number many as the leaves
> Rival in cost the three great men's of yore,
> First those of Arthur, and Caswallon next.
> And Merwydds last, in Mona stands the third."

Another time the poet would seem to think his clerical friends had left him out of their invitation list, and hastens to remind the Abbot of his kinship—

> "Nor kings nor barons can excel
> The wine thou dost bestow so well,
> My parentage is of thy stock;
> Thy nephew chipped from off thy block!"

If these mediæval monasteries were havens of refuge to the poor, hungry, and oppressed in comparatively peaceful England, what must they have been in war-torn Wales! Amid the ceaseless turmoil of that country it is only wonderful how few religious houses of importance were destroyed, and what respect they generally received. The sword and the torch were, at any rate, arrested at their thresholds. The inmates might be removed to make room for others; the revenues might be robbed under legal guise; injustice and oppression might play havoc with the human part of the great Church agency; but the buildings and the endowments, more or less, were always there; and if not one set of men inside them, then another, whose attitude towards the turbulent world around them would be pretty much the same.

Now every schoolboy knows that Edward the First conquered Wales, or rather completed its conquest; but very few schoolboys, and quite a minority of those who have long passed that happy period, I am sure, know that the Norman Church had conquered the Welsh or ancient British Church more than a century before Norman arms had finally broken the spirit and the liberty of North Wales. This was an anachronism, and the mere mention of it sets the door ajar through which volumes

of explanation and whirlwinds of controversy would fain rush in. But we must put our foot against it, and only let in just a few salient facts, which any may read who care to, of those who have never troubled their heads about old Church history, or the relations of the Welsh and English before the two countries became one. Nearly everybody has cast a vote on the matter of Welsh Church Disestablishment, and may have to do so again. And as three out of every four men you meet upon the road in Wales regard this as the Alpha and Omega of their political faith, it is perhaps over-squeamish on my part to protest so much, before recalling some ancient friction of a not wholly dissimilar kind between the two countries. At any rate, there is no more appropriate spot in all Wales than this most delectable one, wherein to gossip for a page or two about these old religious bickerings, which may possibly have more to do with present troubles than people are accustomed to suppose.

For it was in the very year—1199—when the foundations of this abbey, seeing that it was commenced in the next, were probably being laid, that a memorable petition was sent to the "Right Reverend Father and Lord Innocent by grace of God, Pope." The petitioners, headed by Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, or "The Great," were the reigning princes of the three Welsh provinces. Madoc ap Gryffydd, the founder of Valle Crucis, signed for Powis, together with his co-ruler Gwenwynwyn. The petition was taken to Rome by the celebrated writer and churchman, Giraldus Cambrensis; and a pleasant state of affairs it shows. It is a long and bitter arraignment of the greed and tyranny of an intruding Norman Church. The history of that period and of Norman policy in Wales requires no such endorsement as this; but the document is none the less interesting, particularly when signed by so hard-hitting and renowned a soldier as the second Llewelyn. He was more than a match for the Norman warrior; but the wiles and the energy of the Norman cleric were too much even for such a man as he.

"The Archbishop of Canterbury," the petition declares, "sends

us English bishops ignorant of the manner and language of our land, who cannot preach the Word of God to the people nor receive their confessions but through interpreters." This however is a mere sin of omission, which is almost as nothing compared with other abuses. For the men that are sent them, these Welsh princes declare, neither love the people nor their country, persecuting the former with an "innate and deep-rooted hatred, their ambition being to rule, not to benefit them."

They carry off, moreover, and spend in England all the money accruing to them from Welsh abbeys endowed in former days with Welsh money, which they have acquired through the King of England or other means. Still worse, they have alienated to their friends or relations, have these pushing, thrusting Norman clerics, the greater part of the income of the four cathedrals, which are now, the petition declares, "reduced to the utmost poverty." These Princes of Wales, in short, protest against this upstart and new-fangled authority of Canterbury, which is justified by no traditions of the past, and in the present is odious on account of its tyranny and spoliation.

"Besides these things, when the Saxons rush into Wales, the Archbishop of Canterbury puts the whole land under an interdict; and because we and our people [at this time Wales was formally recognised as independent] defend our country against the Saxons and other enemies, he places us and our people under judgment of excommunication, and causes those bishops whom he sent among us to proclaim the judgment, which they are ready to do on all occasions. The consequence is that every one of our people who falls on the field of blood in defence of the liberty of his country dies under the curse of excommunication."

History repeats itself, or, rather, in this matter as relating to Wales, has kept steadily plodding on, for the first part of this indictment might have been written at almost any time up

to the beginning of the present reign without greatly overstating the case.

No one of course needs reminding that Wales retained the old British Christianity during the period when it was extirpated root and branch throughout England by the pagan Saxons. Bearing this with its full significance in mind, it is impossible to divest that memorable meeting of Augustine, about the year 600, with the seven Welsh bishops or abbots on the banks of the Severn, of the humour that, I suppose, ought to be suppressed in dealing with so saintly a group and so luminous an incident. For it really must have been to the highest degree exasperating for people who had been Christians for three or four centuries, and were now fairly organised, who had received their creed from the South and West, and neither knew nor cared anything about Rome and the Pope, to be treated in such haughty fashion by a stranger and a foreigner. The invitation from this outsider to place their episcopalian necks under the yoke of a newly-made missionary bishop hailing from a corner of England that had just been snatched from Paganism may well have struck them dumb with indignation, as indeed, it did. Perhaps even this was not so bad as the quiet assumption of superiority on Augustine's part which was such a leading feature of the interview.

He had spoken, too, in something like pity for many of their cherished traditions—their reckoning of Easter, their tonsures, and their marriages—which was more galling than anger. In short, his airs were insufferable and his customs monstrous. They would have none of him. Neither did it mend matters when the politic Augustine, seeing that he had put his foot in it—for the Welshmen had been so deeply offended, they refused even to break bread under the same roof with him—it did not mend matters, I say, when the Latin monk suggested that his Kymric brethren should at least join him in his efforts to evangelize England. Perhaps it is necessary to have fresh in one's mind the doings of these pagan Saxons when they first

swept over Britain, to realise the horror and repulsion with which they were regarded by the remnants of the old race they had driven from their path. "Love your enemies" was theoretically, no doubt, part of the creed of the old Welsh Christians, even though one may fail to find much trace of any practical application of it in their domestic struggles; but the suggestion of its being extended to the bloody barbarians, who had destroyed the civilisation and religion of Britain, may well have been received with derisive jeers.

"Very well, then," in effect said Augustine, whose temper by this time had got somewhat short, "as you decline to join me in the salvation of Saxon souls, you shall feel the prick of Saxon spears." This was not a pious sentiment, but then the Canterbury saint had received much provocation—a mere empty threat, no doubt, and it must have been a pure coincidence that the destruction of the great Welsh monastery of Bangor Iscoed, near Ruabon, and the slaughter of 1,200 unarmed monks by the Saxons, should have followed so close upon its utterance. Coincidences, however, we need hardly say, were not admitted by the superstitious and partizan chroniclers of old.

At any rate, after this memorable failure of Augustine, the British and the Saxon Churches let one another severely alone till the Norman Conquest. Of course there were individual *rapprochments*, and the Welsh Church was sensibly influenced by so many centuries of neighbourhood with that of the Saxon, the latter by no means remaining that humble servant of Rome that Augustine, its founder, intended. But in effect the two Churches, like the two peoples, remained wholly separate and apart. There was no Archbishop in Wales, but a *primus inter pares* at St. Davids, though it is doubtful if North Wales fully acknowledged even thus much, while all four Prelates administered consecration. The Welsh Church was of a looser, more domestic, and popular description than that of Canterbury even in its laxer periods. It ignored celibacy completely—in fact,

its benefices were largely hereditary. Every fourth or fifth man you met must have been a cleric of some kind. Half a dozen persons, often relatives, then performed the offices—or certainly shared the benefits—of a living, instead of half a dozen livings being in the hands of a single individual, and he perhaps a foreigner and an absentee, as in recent times. It was a popular, family sort of affair, in which bishops and central authorities played a minor part. Above all things, it was distinctly tribal; each district and the group of families who inhabited it had its own stock of priests and to spare, whose services it had a perpetual right to. Communities were unaccustomed to take their religion from outside, or to be ministered to by strangers. To be under the control of foreigners and autocrats seemed to the pre-Norman Welsh Churchman an anachronism inconceivable, intolerable. Mr. Willis Bund, the last exhaustive writer on the subject, and as a well-known Tory and a churchman, holding of a surety no brief for the Disestablishment party, considers that this primitive attitude towards religion has never been stamped out; that the treatment of the Church in Wales in recent centuries, though bad enough to have killed a dozen Churches, is not wholly responsible for the present undesirable state of affairs.

So, though Saxons and Welshmen hammered one another as good Christian neighbours for several hundred years, they made little or no attempt to cram their respective Churches down each other's throats. But when the Normans came it was a very different matter. Their clericalism was of an infinitely stricter and more aggressive sort, both in the matter of souls and benefices. Their churchmen, as I have already said, outstripped even their rapacious warriors in the matter of the gradual annexation of Wales, though not without some assistance, it is true, from steel-clad adventurers. But it was mostly by ingenuity, diplomacy, and tireless persistence that the Anglo-Norman Church, with the full support of the Pope, ousted by degrees the protesting Welshman from power and benefice, and

finally brought Wales, when chiefly represented by themselves, into line with Canterbury. The outward and visible sign of submission came of course when bishops of Welsh nationality began to seek consecration at Canterbury.

Their own laymen, it seems, were not wholly blameless in this matter, or else they had become imprudently exacting towards those who were able to pay. The taunt of the Latin Church against its rival was that the latter's consecration of bishops was invalid, the Pope's pallium never having been sent to Wales. It so happened that just at a time, under the first Norman kings, when the independence of the Welsh Church was weakening, some of the native princes were becoming restive at the sums demanded for indulgences and such like by their own clerics. It was unfortunate that they should at this moment have used such arguments; but that is nothing. It was human enough that they should bring up the Norman bogey of invalid consecration—perhaps half in jest, after all—to bring down the prices of their spiritual superiors, and to hint perhaps that their powers of excommunication were open to question. It was a purely domestic and perhaps trifling quarrel. But the Welsh bishops also were human, and had a weapon ready to hand with which to checkmate their princes, if they chose to pick it up. And they did choose, not being able to resist the temptation, and, in perhaps, from their point of view, short-sighted fashion, began to secure their position by consecration at Canterbury.

Nor, however lightly we may try to touch upon this intricate subject, would it be possible to omit all mention of the religious Orders, which, pouring into Wales long before the Edwardian conquest, threw their whole influence upon the side of the Latin Church, and assisted most materially in its victory. At any rate, it seems pretty evident, judging from the able writers on both sides of a subject which, in many respects, is a distinctly controversial one, that the Welsh Church did not fuse cheerfully and of its own accord with the Anglican. This

however seems rather a matter of academic interest, not because Mr. Bund's theory need be held in less respect, but because such lamentable things have taken place in days comparatively recent, that it is only marvellous a Church of any kind remains in Wales at all. Upon this point, at any rate, preacher and priest, deacon and churchwarden, Tory and Radical, are heartily at one.



The Crucis Abbey.

I have no business in the world, considering the task that I have set myself, to go another yard further up this "Valley of the Cross." If I turn aside in this fashion to every spot whither inclination beckons me on our pilgrimage through North Wales, we should do well if we arrived at Bala Lake, and most certainly should not smell the sea, before the liberal space allotted to me in this volume had run out, and it was time to write "Finis," on the closing page. But this departure is irresist-

ible, for at the very source and fountain-head of this same glen, and some five miles distant, stands an ancient manor-house, which is not only worth a much longer journey to visit for itself alone, but a tale hangs thereby of a once very famous lady whose charms set all Wales agog and caused such a commotion as to stir even the King of England on his distant throne. It is a rough enough road that leads to this sequestered spot, whose proper name, I should mention, is Plas Eglwyseg, but which the neighbourhood, and even the maps, not inaptly call the "World's End." This little divergence, too, will save us from the reproach of leaving the Valley without having set eyes upon the ancient pillar, once a cross, that gave it its name.

Yonder it is, in a meadow just above the abbey, and close to the road. It is now only five or six feet high; but let us look on what is left of it with awe. Antiquarian societies gather round the relic with bated breath to hear words of wisdom from their most illustrious leaders. It is said to be the earliest inscribed pillar subsequent to the Roman period in Britain. For though now illegible, it was not so in the days of Pennant and other modern antiquaries, and transcripts were then taken, which inform us that it was built by one Eliseg, and his pedigree, the oldest record of a pedigree in Wales, is carved thereon.

We have no time to record the surpassing beauty of the narrow winding valley which, looking at every turn as if the end must be at hand, still burrows deeper into the hills. At one moment our road lifts us far aloft, almost to a level, it sometimes seems, with the grey precipices of the Eglwysegs which shut in the other side of the gorge; at another, dropping us right down into the sparkling stream, where the riotous wealth of tumbling woodland is broken by strips of narrow meadow, and here and there with white cottages, whose very roofs, waving with fern and lichen, seem to partake of the general luxuriance. At the end of all things, when the last bit of civilisation has been left behind, and the stream is getting noisier and steeper in its fall, and the

road, dwindled to a mere lane, seems to be leading upward and aimlessly into a high gorge overhead, between woods and cliffs and birch-sprinkled sheep-pastures, we find ourselves suddenly face to face with the object of our journey, an ancient and exquisite specimen of Tudor architecture, standing in perfect repair, and quite alone, amid the woods.

Like all the old Welsh manors, it is more or less of a miniature, and, like so many of the houses on either side of the border, is of the beautiful "black and white" style, with latticed windows. Over the door is an inscription to the effect that the Manor of Eglwyseg was inherited by the Princes of Powys from Bleddyn ap Cynvyn, King of North Wales, who was killed in 1073. But before dealing with the chief and most famous incident with which this remote spot is connected, it will be well first to walk through it, and note the rich panelling of the walls, the old oak stairs, the quaint furniture and carved bedsteads, and the deep windows letting into the low oak-raftered rooms a dim light, already chastened by the shadow of the big trees that rise above the roof. You might wonder, too, at the number of Roundhead accoutrements scattered about, unmistakable relics of the Civil War, and at the predominance of that period among the old portraits on the wainscoated walls. Here, for instance, is an original of Cromwell by Lely, the second best, I believe, in England, and close by one of his mother; and the mystery of all this is readily explained by the fact that the manor belonged to Colonel Jones of Maesygarnedd, Cromwell's brother-in-law, a noted Parliamentarian and one of the signers of the King's death-warrant. He was hanged and quartered at the Restoration, and Pepys speaks of meeting his "still smoking limbs" being carried through the streets. The interest taken by his descendants, who till recently, though they have long left Wales, kept possession of the old house, explains the up-keep of this rare and charming oasis.

But it was when the predecessor of the present Tudor house was the "Hafod," or summer retreat of Cadogan, Prince of

Powys and South Wales, that the memorable incident occurred, which would make any one familiar with Welsh history almost forget the brother-in-law of Cromwell, and think rather of the dare-devil Owen, the son of Cadogan, and the beautiful Nest, popularly known as the "Helen of Wales." This lady was the daughter of Rhys ap Tudor, a potent prince in South Wales. Being at the English Court, when quite a girl, under the care of Henry the First, that King, enamoured of her beauty, took advantage of his position, and she gave birth to a son who was afterwards Duke of Gloucester. Henry however found for Nest a good match, giving her in marriage to Gerald de Windsor, Earl of Pembroke, the founder by this alliance of the great Irish family of Geraldines; and the two seemed to have lived together in South Wales in complete domestic harmony, which perhaps was creditable, as the country rang with her beauty.

Now this was about the year 1106, and Cadogan, who is among the outstanding Princes of Welsh history, though he suffered varied fortunes, was keeping Christmas, and holding a great Eisteddfod in South Wales, to which everybody of distinction flocked. Among the guests came his son Owen, who lived in his father's second kingdom of Powys, and had for a hunting-seat this same Plas Eglwyseg. Owen was a heady youth, passionate and selfish, and absolutely reckless when pursuing any object of his love or hate. Amid the revelry of his father's court he heard such rumours of the beauty of Nest that he rode to Pembroke, and, under the plea of a remote relationship, gained access to her presence. The lady was more beautiful than even his wildest visions had imagined, and he at once formed a resolution which even for the year 1106 was a sufficiently audacious one.

For returning to his father's palace, he collected privily a band of youths as reckless as himself, and under cover of night, broke into the King's great castle of Pembroke, which he proceeded to set on fire, having first surrounded the chamber where Gerald and his wife slept. Gerald had just time to pull up the

boards in a cupboard and escape down a drain, while Nest and her two children were seized and carried off by Owen and his companions, and brought in hot haste across Wales into Powys, where, according to tradition, they were secured in this inaccessible seclusion of Eglwyseg. Great indeed was the uproar. Poor King Cadogan came all the way from South Wales to intreat his son to restore the wife of Gerald, Henry's prime favourite and Constable of Pembroke. Nothing however would stir the amorous and headstrong Owen, though he did at last consent to send back the children. It seems possible indeed that Nest herself had become partly reconciled to her lot; but this as may be. All Wales, at any rate, was set by the ears, while Henry raged upon his distant throne, and started the whole Border machinery to work vengeance on everything belonging to poor Cadogan, who was of course entirely innocent of offence. Every Norman baron who had got a footing in South Wales saw in the general confusion a chance to enlarge it. Owen fled to Ireland. Cadogan was stripped of Powis by a rival Welsh family, and of much of South Wales. Nest found her way back to her husband, and the seething country, after two or three years of war, settled down again to one of its brief periods, of what in those days passed for peace. The episode however closed in a fashion truly dramatic. For it so fell out that the disinherited Owen, who, with Ireland for his refuge in time of need, never ceased from troubling Wales, found himself long afterwards fighting in a Welsh quarrel upon the same side as the man he had wronged. To be strictly accurate, it was Gerald who first discovered the situation, and, regardless of the common cause—not one of principle we may be sure—in which they were both engaged, at once sought out his ancient enemy. A fight to the death ensued, in which the riotous Welsh prince fell by the hand of the Norman baron he had in earlier youth so infamously injured, and now for the first time met face to face.

Just behind the old house is a deep glen, down which a

mountain rivulet, hidden completely from the day, burrows its way beneath wild breaks of woodland, fern, and heather. Tradition still calls the path that twists and turns through this bosky wilderness after the headstrong son of Cadogan, who raised such a turmoil in his day. It affirms, as the inscription on a block of stone hard by will tell you, that it was by this rude track that he and his men went and came upon their wild adventures. The whole place is peaceful enough now in very truth. Between the mighty back of Cyrn-y-Brain upon the north, and the uplifted limestone bluffs of Craig Arthur and Craig-y-deryn upon the south, not a sign of human life is stirring. The very winds seem to be held at bay, high up though we are, by the encircling hills. Not a sound is to be heard but the splash of water falling over rocks, the tinkle of a sheep-bell from the stony pastures above, or the call of some wide-wandering cock pheasant in the woods below.

But we must get back as quickly and as best we may to the Dee valley once more; and at the spot where our road strikes that sacred stream, somewhat higher up than where we left it, we shall find its waters in a terrible commotion. For it is just here that they break their way through, what may be called the gateway of the Vale of Llangollen proper, the foot-hills pressing so closely together that the river, pent into a narrow bed, goes raging down through terraced channels of jagged rock in fierce and strenuous protest. A graceful suspension-bridge swings across the sounding chasm. Passing over this, and climbing a few yards, we are on the platform of the little wayside station of Berwyn, and also upon the old Holyhead road, which will be our route for the next chapter or two at any rate. Before stepping on to it, however, it may fairly be remarked that few railway platforms, in any country compensate you for a tardy train with such a gem in the way of a natural picture as this high-perched one of Berwyn; above all, too, when the sun from a clear sky is drooping westward. For the natural gateway, on one of whose pillars it may be described as standing, opens out here

to the west with some abruptness a wide stretch of most exquisite landscape—the foreground alive with glancing waters, and a background dominated by the bold summit and shapely shoulders of Moel-y-Gamelin. Up among the woods to our left, on the breast of the Berwyns, lies Meifod, where the most celebrated sheep-dog trials in Wales are held, and Welsh collies from every part of the Principality and the Marches fill crowds of holiday visitors from Birmingham and Liverpool with astonishment and delight. Across the river, and beautifully placed on the brow of a green slope, sprinkled with silvery birch-trees, is the little church of Llantysilio, where the mould is yet fresh upon the grave of one of the most prominent of contemporary Welshmen, the late Osborne Morgan; while among the trees just beyond rises the roof-tree of another distinguished veteran, happily still among us, Sir Theodore Martin.

But we are now upon Telford's famous road again, and must get on. As a matter of fact however, this is just about the one spot between Shrewsbury and Holyhead where speed, either on horse or cycle, would be out of the question, with any due regard, that is to say, to the wind of the former or one's own interior economy. The railroad indeed flinches altogether from this huge wooded spur of Moel-y-Geraint, and burrows through it in a long tunnel; the river making a most remarkable horse-shoe circuit of five miles—and a most enchanting circuit it is—in its efforts to get round it. Telford however chose to face the hill, and has left us, as a legacy of his decision, a mile or more of steady collar work, the bane of westward-bound cyclists and the joy of those returning to the English border. That the Holyhead road is the most beloved of all North Welsh roads by the cyclist goes without saying. There are innumerable stretches of ten or fifteen miles of excellent highway all over the Principality; but upon the Holyhead road the traveller can absolutely rely, and over the whole eighty miles of its course through Wales go upon his

way rejoicing and without fear. It is not only that the bed of the road is hard and dry and broad, but the hill up which we are now toiling is the only one that I can think of, at which the rider of average strength and wind would feel called upon to dismount. And this too in spite of the fact that, in crossing the wild watershed between the Dee and the Conway, he would find himself within a fraction of a thousand feet above the sea.

But above all, upon this whole long stretch from Ruabon to the Menai—for over inland Anglesey we will drop a veil—there is not a dull mile. Nay, there is scarcely a mile that is not beautiful. The table-lands of Cerrig-y-druidion and Cernioge, whose elevation is indicated above, are labelled by the guide-books, it is true, as bleak or dreary. I venture to disagree with them, and am only sorry they lie outside our route.

In any case I do not think there can possibly be another sixty miles of road in the kingdom that combines so much that is comfortable with so much that is beautiful. Yet even here, as elsewhere, so far as I have seen—and I have seen a good deal of him—the cyclist seems much more given over to mileage than to contemplating the handiwork of Nature. Three out of four would be a moderate estimate of those whose eyes apparently look neither to the right nor left but to mark a milestone, and seem only intent upon the single object of reaching that haven somewhere in the remote horizon where chops and bitter beer, or tea and muffins, reward the labourer for his meritorious grind. Yet, after all, perhaps even the stoniest-looking of this majority carry away unconsciously some vague impressions of loveliness that through the corners of their eyes have been photographed upon their brain. To all outward seeming however these merry scorchers might just as well be upon the Portsmouth road between Kingston-upon-Thames and Surbiton, with the "Bear" at Esher as their loadstar, instead of the "Owen Glyndwr" at Corwen or the "Saracen's Head" at Cerrig-y-Druidion.

We, at any rate, will pause where the screening woods break at the top of the hill, or, at least, creep very gently along the broad and level turnpike cut into the almost perpendicular side of the Berwyn range; for here below us is a prospect such as even in North Wales is not often equalled. Above, woods hang high over our heads for many hundred feet, and it is only here and there we can catch sight of the still ascending slopes of rock and heather beyond them, which form the outer ledges of far-reaching and famous grouse moors. At a great depth below us spreads out, in exquisite confusion, a valley whose glades and plough-lands and white farm-houses, only show like patches of varied colour amid a sea of foliage. Flashing adown the centre of the picture, and through the heart of the woodlands goes the Dee—no mere mountain stream, though with all the humour of one—but a broad and noble river. In times of storm a sheet of seething foam; in summer days a broad band of silver, palpitating and glimmering and whitening with the speed at which even then it urges its crystal streams over its rocky bed.

But it is not only upon a gem of landscape that, when Autumn has laid its fiery finger on the woods, and October floods are raging through them, I sometimes think, though foolishly no doubt, is matchless, that we are looking down. For this is the country of Glyndwr, the great Glyndwr, the hero above all heroes that the long memory and the romantic temperament of the Welsh people cherish—a personage whom English historians for the most part have treated with scant attention and little justice. We were told stories at our mothers' knees of Bruce and Wallace. They were both successful. We did not understand then that Bruce was an Anglo-Norman baron with the average motives of his breed, and certainly had no suspicion that William Wallace was by blood a Welshman, which some recent writers have had the hardihood to more than hint; nor had we any idea that Scotland was anything but a homogeneous country, peopled by an alien race, struggling to be free. For myself, I have never yet been able to understand why the Dano-Teutonic-Norman people

of the Lothians and Fife should have been so desperately eager for political severance from their friends and relatives in Northumberland and Durham, nor what particular advantage accrued from the mutual throat-cutting that went on upon both sides of the Border for three hundred years, to the detriment of both countries, and most of all the smaller one. But any one can see the logic of the Welsh fight for freedom, however thankful he may be that so futile a struggle was not more prolonged. Race, language, laws, habits, temperament, tradition, made the two peoples naturally repulsive to each other. And this mutual repulsion was by no means mellowed by centuries of strife which had scarcely shifted the border-line a dozen miles, so fierce and determined was its character.

But we are now dropping down the long gentle slope into the village of Glyndyfrdwy, the centre of that romantic valley which the Welsh hero, Owain, the son of Gryffyth Vychan, owned like his father before him, and from which he took his name. And now that we are actually in his country I propose to say a good deal about this much-neglected person, if the reader will bear with me, but will defer the subject to another chapter.

Glyndyfrdwy—or, as usually written in former days, Glyndwfrdwy—merely signifies the Glen of the Dee, "dwfrdwy" being the Welsh name for the sacred river, the termination, in fact, being generally regarded as a corruption of "dhu," divine, while "dwfr" is the Kymric for water. There are small slate quarries near here up among the Berwyn mountains, and the little village which straggles along either side of the descending road is chiefly inhabited by the men who work in them. We may remark, however, in passing, the neat church upon the left, not because it is old or interesting, for it is neither, but because instances in the heart of North Wales where a rustic church is filled on Sundays with a Welsh-speaking congregation, are not by any means too numerous. They show what an active and popular parson can do, though the converse by no means, in Wales, always implies that it is the parson's fault.

In the middle of the village a bridge crosses a deep glen, down which a mountain torrent, cold from the distant heights of Moel Fernau, 2,000 feet above, tumbles towards the Dee. The mention of Church matters and the sight of this spot reminds me that old George Borrow had here one of his quaint passages-of-arms with a devout chapel-goer of the gentler sex, who issued from the doorway of the cottage still standing yonder beside the bridge, and heckled him on the matter of Sabbath-breaking. Our author, having read the Morning Service, he takes care to tell us, to his wife and daughter, issued forth alone on Sunday morning from his lodgings at Llangollen for one of his twenty-mile walks. Not that he approved in principle of cutting church or walking on the Sabbath, he says with some illogical disregard for his subsequent reasoning, but he was prompted on this occasion to break rules by a pardonable curiosity regarding the attitude of the Welsh people towards the day of rest. His curiosity was very quickly gratified when he challenged the attention of the aforesaid lady here upon the bridge of Glyndyfrdwy by addressing her in Welsh, and rashly inquiring if she had been to chapel.

"Have *you* been to chapel, sir?" replied the woman.

"I do not go to chapel; I belong to the Church."

"Have you been to church, sir?"

"I have not. I said my prayers at home, and then walked out."

"It is not right to walk out on the Sabbath day, except to go to church or chapel."

"Who told you so?"

"The law of God, which says you shall keep holy the Sabbath day."

"I am not keeping it unholy."

"In Wales, when we see a person walking idly about on the Sabbath Day, we are in the habit of saying, 'Sabbath-breaker, where are you going?'"

"The Son of Man walked through the fields on the Sabbath Day; why should I not walk along the roads?"

"He who called Himself the Son of Man was God, and could do what He pleased; but you are not God."

This, I think, would have effectually routed most of us; but the resourceful author of *The Bible in Spain* was more than equal to the occasion.

"But He came in the shape of a man to set an example. Had there been anything wrong in walking about on the Sabbath Day, He would not have done it."

The woman gave a gasp, and surrendered at discretion, muttering, "What worldly-wise people these English are!"

And old Borrow stumped on fifteen miles to Cerrig-y-Druidion, where he introduced himself to the hostess of the "Lion Inn" with a set speech and a profound bow, being met in a similar serio-comic fashion by the landlady of still-famous memory, and spent the evening discussing Welsh poetry with the doctor over the inevitable brandy-and-water, and talking Italian to a Milanese pedlar.

Yes—there is no doubt about it, Borrow was a wonderful man; but we must get on to a still more remarkable personage.

CHAPTER V

OWEN GLYNDWR

Owain of Glyndyfrdwy, or Owen Glyndwr, as he was commonly called, is beyond all doubt the greatest of Welsh heroes in the eyes of the majority of Welshmen. He was the son of Griffith Vychan, and inherited from his father this commote of Glyndyfrdwy, which stretched along either bank of the Dee from just above Berwyn to the little town of Corwen. He was of illustrious stock, for we trod upon the dust of his ancestors at Valle Crucis, being none other than that Madoc ap Griffith who founded the abbey, and his son Griffith ap Madoc, Lord of Dinas Brân, and joint Prince of Powys, who was laid there in 1270, after changing sides more than once in the final struggle for Welsh liberty. This Griffith ap Madoc left his wide domains between his four sons. But his widow, being an Englishwoman, Lady Emma, the sister of Lord Audley, renowned for his effective use of German cavalry against the Welsh, flinched from so stormy a trust, and handed over the two elder orphans to the guardianship of King Edward the First.

The King, in accordance with a common custom, made over the boys and their estates to the keeping of two of his favourite Barons of the Marches, Earl Warren and Roger Mortimer, who signalised their guardianship by raising the great castles of Chirk and Holt, and shortly afterwards by disposing of their wards, so runs the legend, in a deep hole in the Dee near

the latter place. At any rate, they were never heard of again; and Edward apparently asked no questions, while nobody else dared. So the two barons entered without further trouble upon their splendid inheritance. The third boy in the meantime died in his bed, the fourth, and the surviving one, being still in his mother's keeping. After a time, however, Lord Warren's conscience began to trouble him. Perhaps he had the gout or an ague, and thought he was going to die. At any rate, he went to Rhuddlan, where the King was arranging the affairs of the now finally conquered country, and requested that the surviving son of Griffith ap Madoc should be given the small outlying strip of his late father's country, which we have already described as Glyndyfrdwy, while his mother's property of Cynllaeth, south of the Ceiriog and behind Oswestry, was also secured to him.

Owen Glyndwr was the great-grandson of this fourth son, and was enjoying these two properties, living sometimes on one and sometimes on the other, when he became famous. He was no rude Welsh squire. On the contrary, he probably went to Oxford, but he certainly, like many young aristocrats of his day, studied at the Inns of Court, and shortly afterwards took to the profession of arms and to Court life. He was squire of the body to Henry of Bolingbroke, afterwards Henry IV., his lifelong foe. He may or may not, as Welsh authorities say on the strength of tradition, have attended Richard II. in the same capacity, accompanied him to Ireland, and been among the ill-fated King's followers when he was taken prisoner near Conway. But when Henry IV. ascended the throne, Owen, beyond a doubt, was living quietly at Glyndyfrdwy, though at loggerheads with his great neighbour to the north, Lord Grey of Ruthin, whose family since 1284 had been Lord Marchers of the Upper Vale of Clwyd and a power in Wales. A strip of moorland lay between Glyndyfrdwy and Grey's country, called Croesau. Both claimed it; but Owen had carried the matter to the courts

in London during Richard's reign, and won his case Now however, Glyndwr being either in actual fact, or merely as a Welshman presumed to be, attached to Richard, Grey thought it a good opportunity to re annex the disputed territory, and did so.

Owen however was not the man to sit down tamely under this treatment. At the same time he seems to have been legally inclined, for he brought the case again before the King's Council, peacefully urging a restitution of those rights which the law had already confirmed. But Grey was a favourite at Court, and Owen's suit was rejected with contumely; it was not even treated to the courtesy of a hearing. It was in vain that the Bishop of St. Asaph, a friend to Henry, but intimate with Welsh affairs, urgently warned him not to wantonly provoke a man who, though of only moderate estate, was of great ability and influence, and bore a name that was one to conjure with in Wales. But it was of no avail. "What care we for the barefoots?" was the contemptuous reply.

Owen, having tried legal means, now resorted to arms, and expelled Grey's people by force from the disputed soil. Not much perhaps might have come of this, but the infatuated Lord Marcher persisted in a course, for which he was to pay dearly, and his master but little less so. It was the year 1400, the first of Henry's reign, and he was raising an army for service against Scotland. Glyndwr, among the other barons of England and Wales, was summoned to his standard; but the message being sent through Lord Grey, as the official channel, was with poor spite suppressed, and Owen denounced as a defaulter to the King. Wales was in a distinctly electrical condition. Its people, if not actually attached to Richard, had the Celtic sentiment of reverence for a crowned head, and had not felt his abuses. At any rate, they looked on Henry as a rank usurper. Ruthin easily persuaded the King that Owen was a rebel, got special powers to act against all such recalcitrants, and, raising a force, marched with Earl Talbot of Chirk directly on his enemy, who was then quietly living on his

second property of Sycherth on the Cynllaeth, ten miles south of Glyndyfrdwy. His house was surrounded, and he had only just time to escape into the woods. But the mischief was done, and the pity of it was its wantonness. They had sown the wind, and they were to reap the whirlwind with a vengeance.

Now Glyndwr was not only of the direct line of the Princes of Powys, but by his mother side he was descended from Llewelyn the Great. He was, moreover, brave and handsome, a skilful soldier, and no mean statesman, as after events proved. He had kept open house too, whither bards and minstrels thronged, and where all who came were feasted, and he was immensely popular. His wife was a daughter of Sir Thomas Hanmer, of Hanmer in Flint, and he had a family who were already marrying into Border houses, for Owen himself was now over forty years of age. His friend, the laureate of his cause, "Iolo Goch," one of the greatest of Welsh poets of that or any time, has left us vivid pictures of the manor-house at Sycherth, in the parish of Llansilin, its glories and its hospitalities. The mound on which it stood, and the moat, are there yet. I wish it lay in our track; but it may be reached comfortably from Oswestry, along a good road. Besides the main house, which had nine halls and a gate-house, there was a wooden building with eight guest-chambers, a church in the form of a cross, with several chapels, a park full of deer, a heronry and a warren, a pigeon-house, a well-stocked fish-pond, with orchards, vineyards, and a mill, whither Owen's numerous tenants brought their grain. Concerning the good cheer which reigned within Iolo waxes enthusiastic. The wine and ale, white bread and metheglyn which accompanied the music and song were unstinted and of the best. No porter was required, so great was the hospitality. The gates stood always open, and no stranger was ever refused admittance. As for the lady of the manor—"She was the best of wives, beneficent mother of a noble family. Happy am I in her wine and metheglyn. Her children come two-by-two, a beautiful nest of chieftains."

We are even now standing upon the site of the Glyndyfrdwy mansion. It is only a mile beyond the village, and touches the Holyhead road, and is marked by one of a chain of tumuli, that the prehistoric occupants of this Dee valley saw fit to rear as tombs or watch posts along its whole length. This particular one is exceedingly conspicuous and is crowned by a group of aged fir trees, which make melancholy and suggestive music as you stand beneath them, and look up and down the narrow valley, or at the Dee fretting in broad current and white breakers beneath your feet.

Compared to this old tumulus the Welsh hero was a man of yesterday, though all traces of his mansion in the green paddock at its base have gone save some irregular upheavals of the turf: while in the "fine park" which Prince Henry writes of, after he had ravaged it, and where Glyndwr hawked and hunted, the barley is heading, and the horses of Pen-y-bont farm yonder are dragging the cultivators up and down the freshly sprouted turnip rows, and the clover is blooming ready for the scythe.

But Glyndwr was actually born in Pembrokeshire, though this was merely due to the fact of his mother coming from that country and being no doubt on a temporary visit to her people, when the event occurred which, as we all know, "filled the front of heaven with fiery shapes." While

> The goats ran from the mountains and the herds
> Were strangely clamorous to the frighted fields.

It seems, however, to have escaped even Shakespeare, that on that memorable night the horses in the stables of Griffith Vychan, Glyndwr's father, were found standing up to their bellies in blood.

There had been a hundred years of peace in Wales. Welshmen had been fighting by thousands under the flag of England in France, Ireland, and the North; but at home they were not happy, and only half reconciled. The heel of the Lord

Marcher was on their necks, and Grey of Ruthin was a pronounced specimen of the breed; besides which many harsh discriminating laws kept the sore of conquest rankling. They had not been consulted either on the change of monarchs. Richard too seems really to have touched their sentimental side, poor creature though he was, and his ill-treatment at the hands of his usurping cousin, coupled with the mystery of his whereabouts and his fate, prepared the minds of Welshmen for some great endeavour. The bards moreover, so long suppressed, were once more upon the war-path. Sages were ransacking the ancient prophecies, and portents were rife in sky and sea. So when this scion of the great house of Powys and the still greater race of Gwynedd raised once more the dragon standard on the banks of what the Welsh call the Dyfrdwy, and the English the Dee, it was too late to talk of peace; the fat was in the fire.

> Cambria's princely eagle hail,
> Of Gryffyth Vychans noble blood,
> Thy high renown shall never fail;
> Owain Glyndwr the Great, the Good,
> Lord of Glyndwfrdwys fertile vale,
> High born princely Owain hail.

Thus sang the Red Iolo, voicing an enthusiasm that was soon to shake Wales to its uttermost limits.

Owen's first move, naturally enough, was on Grey's town of Ruthin, which he attacked on a fair-day and burnt to the ground. The native aristocracy, for the most part, as yet held back; but the commons of Edward's four northern counties, and of the lordships in Clwyd and Powysland, rallied to his side in such numbers that he crossed the marches and harried western Shropshire to the walls of Shrewsbury. The King was fighting the Scotch, and it was the autumn of the year, the first of the century, before he could respond to the urgent appeals of his Marchers and turn his attention to Wales, and late in September before he met the levies of ten

English counties at Shrewsbury and made the first of many futile excursions into the Principality.

Henry and his army had reached Anglesey; but the Welsh, in accordance with their ancient tactics, retiring to Snowdonia, there was nothing for it but to return. So within a month the King was back at Worcester, issuing orders for the Government of Wales, of which Harry Percy, or Hotspur, under the nominal orders of young Prince Henry, then only fourteen, was the administrator. But in the meantime the insurrection was spreading all over the Principality. Welsh undergraduates, fired with patriotism, left Oxford, and Welsh labourers left English ploughs for Owen's standard in great numbers, and even Cheshire, a county palatine, was greatly disaffected.

In Wales however any mere question of succession, though Richard's name was freely used, was soon lost sight of in a revival of the old national aspirations, and a passionate effort to shake off a system of government that was intolerable rather from its abuses than its intentions. Something of the spirit too which had stirred up the great labour agitations of the 14th century in England, found its echo in Glyndwr's supporters. There was, in fact, a touch of democracy in the movement. The upper class, as a body, held for some time aloof; and this was not unnatural, for they had intermarried to a considerable extent with the Norman Marcher families; they were often themselves the instruments of bad government, not the victims; above all, they had a good deal to lose. Later on, when the war assumed serious proportions, and Glyndwr was virtually, as well as by assumption, Prince of Wales, and men had definitely to choose one side or the other, it might be within the mark to say that half, or even more than half, the Welsh upper class were with him.

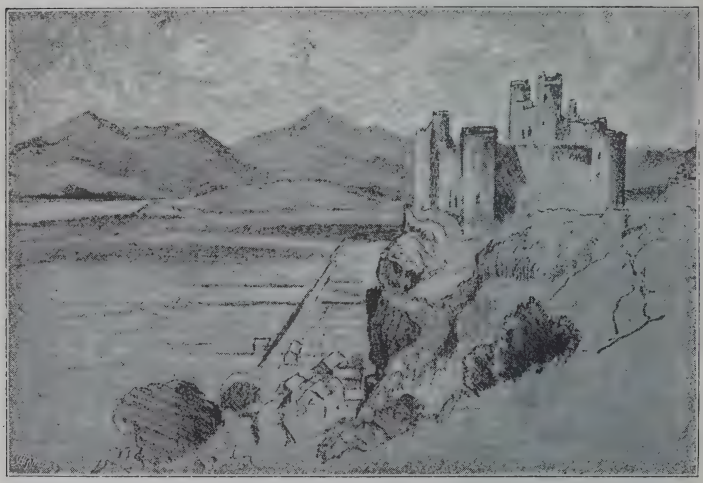
However, to attempt any analysis here of the motives and the ingredients of Glyndwr's desperate struggle, which raged for eight years and simmered on for another seven, would be futile and superfluous. It lasted throughout the whole reign of

Henry the Fourth, and no doubt helped to shorten that much-harassed monarch's life. Again and again the king himself, with large armies, broke through Wales to the sea, and as often had to retire with troops starved for lack of food, soaked and ill from the fierce storms that seemed to fight ever on the side of the Welsh, and harassed on flank and rear by agile foes. The boast that Shakespeare puts into Glyndwr's mouth quite early in the war was no empty one—

> "Three times hath Henry Bolingbroke made head
> Against my power. Thrice from the banks of Wye,
> And sandy-bottomed Severn, have I sent
> Him bootless home, and weatherbeaten back."

The English, as well as the Welsh, became convinced that Owen was a magician, that the powers of darkness fought upon his side, and that he could indeed "call spirits from the vasty deep" and was "outside the roll of common men." He began the war, no doubt, as a mere avenger of his private injuries, but soon found himself a national hero, another Arthur or Llewelyn, around whom the long smouldering flames of patriotism were leaping high. From North Wales he had turned to the South, planted his flag on the smooth summit of Plinlimon, and added the lustre of personal achievement to his already great reputation by cutting his way with a handful of men through an army of Flemings who had come up against him from Pembroke. He won a complete victory over the royal forces on the hill of Pilleth in Radnorshire, and captured Edmund Mortimer, uncle of the young Earl of March, the rightful heir to the throne. How he converted Mortimer from his prisoner into his son-in-law and ally will be familiar to those who remember their Shakespeare. How the Percies fell away from Henry, and proposed to divide England with Owen and Mortimer, is a matter both of dramatic and historic note, and their overthrow at Shrewsbury scarcely checked the tide of the Welsh chieftain's success.

The King had tried conciliation again and again, and offered pardons freely at the end of each fruitless campaign. All Wales passed out of his grasp, except a score or two of Norman castles, which lifted their beleagured walls above the surging tide of Welsh successes. Even these, however, fell in time. Carnarvon, Conway, Harlech, Aberystwith, is but to mention a



Harlech Castle and Snowdon.

fraction of those strongholds which became the scene of fierce encounters.

The English parliament, in which Wales was as yet unrepresented, had not shared Henry's conciliatory views, but in something of a panic had passed savage laws against the Welsh, which was of little use, seeing that they could not be enforced. Owen had summoned parliaments of his own at Dolgelly and Machynlleth, and had been crowned Prince of Wales. He entered into negotiations too with Scotland and France, sending

emissaries to Paris, who were formally received and an alliance entered into, which resulted in French troops being landed in Wales; for in 1405, or the sixth year of the war, no less than ten thousand French, with as many Welsh, under Glyndwr, penetrated as far as Worcester. They had landed at Milford in 140 ships, commanded by Jean de Rieux, Marshal of France, and were resplendent, we are told, in fine trappings and much bravery of appearance.

Owen's chief opponent during the latter years of the struggle was the King's son, the gallant Prince Henry, the future victor of Agincourt, who learnt his trade, in fact, in this hard school, and must have had but scant opportunity for those debaucheries which Shakespeare and legend have painted him as so greatly given to. He was in truth a precociously sober and responsible young man, spending his time chiefly at Chester and Shrewsbury, and with the whole care of the Welsh troubles and the Welsh wars upon his shoulders. He came here to Glyndyfrdwy when Owen was in South Wales and burnt his house. He also went to Sycherth and burnt the more pretentious mansion there—a full account of which he writes to his father's Council, the letter being at this day preserved in the British Museum.

The ruin caused in Wales was awful. Both sides seemed to vie with each other in the work of destruction—the English as a punishment to the Welsh, while Owen on his part spared nothing in his efforts to make the country untenable for hostile armies. He came down too with heavy hand on Welsh proprietors who would not join him, and, bearing a great grudge against the Church, which was mostly hostile to his cause, destroyed many sacred buildings, including the cathedrals of Bangor and St. Asaph and the abbey of Cwm hir in Radnor. The revival of the old British Church as a separate institution was part of his future programme, as well as the creation of an archbishopric of St. Davids, the acknowledgment of the French Pope, for it was the time of Avignon schism, and two

universities for Wales. So much he has left us under his own hand. And this makes his iconoclasm all the more remarkable.

Of all Glyndwr's exploits however the most satisfactory to himself must have been a bloody fight, though upon a small scale, that he had with his old enemy Grey, outside the latter's castle of Ruthin. For in this meeting he not only proved the victor, but actually made the haughty and pestilent Norman a prisoner, and kept him under lock and key for a long and weary period—sometimes in the strong castle of Dolbadarn, under Snowdon, and sometimes no doubt in the old house, Carchady Owen, still standing, at Llansaintffraid. He had the satisfaction also of exacting so large a ransom for his freedom that the King had to appoint a commission to collect it, and its payment left Grey a ruined man for life.

The struggle began in the year 1400, and it was about 1407 that Glyndwr's power began seriously to wane. The French, who for two years had helped him, grew tired of a war in which there was little plunder to be had and no glory, and left the country, while many of Owen's partizans became wearied and disheartened under the continuous attacks delivered against them by the whole might of England. Every year, too, pardons were offered in wholesale fashion, and the temptation to accept them for a small fine grew stronger. Anglesey was the only corner of Wales that had not been at one time or other a battle-field, and there is a list yet extant of over 2,000 names from that island alone whose bearers came in and bought their pardon.

But the old hero himself never dreamed of submission. Retiring to Snowdon, and thence breaking out from time to time with a band of faithful followers, he maintained himself till he was so nearly friendless that he drops out of history, and one hears only of the dreadful havoc that he had wrought.

But even then he had no thought of yielding. King Henry died in the Jerusalem Chamber, struck down in the prime of life; but Glyndwr though ten years older, was still a wandering

outlaw. There are no details of these last two or three silent years, but that he was still defiant is evident from the fact that the young King, Henry V., took special pains in the first period of his reign, remembering with the generosity of a brave soldier the antagonist before whose hard knocks he had learnt the trade of war, to send him an unconditional pardon. The bearer of it was Owen's only surviving son ; the other one we hear of, and his brother Tudor, had both fallen in battle.

But the pardon came too late. Glyndwr was dead, and, though there is no certainty in the matter, a strong tradition has it that he died at his daughter's house at Monnington, and that his dust lies somewhere beneath the turf of the old Herefordshire churchyard.

One cannot hope within so narrow a compass to give a just idea of the long heroic struggle, so full of incident, romance, and tragedy, maintained by this indomitable Welshman against the full power of England. Nor is it possible, I think, in so brief a space to make plain why to most Welshmen he stands the first among all their heroes. But we must at the same time not forget, as a minority of Welshmen indeed do not forget, and, thus remembering, temper their admiration, what Glyndwr cost Wales. For the price paid for this hero and his heroic failure—though greatly aggravated beyond a doubt by the ensuing Wars of the Roses—was nearly a century of woe and misery, of anarchy and desolation.

Owen's faithful laureate, Iolo, celebrated his master's renown with much hyperbole, and grieved for his sorrows in language that was almost feminine in its shrieking agony. But no one, will deny the prophetic ring of such a stanza as this, at any rate, nor probably had even the poet himself any idea how literally it would be fulfilled—

> "And when thy evening sun is set,
> May grateful Cambria ne'er forget
> Thy noontide blaze, but on thy tomb
> May never-fading laurels bloom."

It is such a short step off the main road to the fine old bridge of five arches which spans the Dee, yonder, at the village of Llansantffraid-Glyndyfrdwy, we will drop down the sharp pitch leading thither, and loiter for a moment in the angle of one of those hoary buttresses that a rudely-carved date tells us have withstood the fury of the river since the year when all Wales rejoiced so loudly at the restoration of the Stuarts. The railway authorities, quailing before the prospect of such a name upon their time-tables, with scant ceremony dubbed the little station Carrog, after a neighbouring farm-house. Her Majesty's postal authorities, after struggling for many years with the difficulty, followed suit, and struck one of the dozen or more Llansantffraids off their books, and rechristened the whole village in somewhat arbitrary if convenient fashion.

The normal correspondence of the ancient village where Glyndwr locked up his prisoners in the stone house still tottering on the river bank, and probably said his prayers at a church long washed away, would certainly not have justified such a revolution. But, as a matter of fact, for a generation or two it has been a favourite resort of anglers and other quiet folk. Nor is there, I think, in all North Wales a more delightful and characteristic spot of its kind than this old bridge—though it was not precisely to talk about it that we have come down here. As a matter of fact, we must not leave the Dee without saying something about coracles, since it is the only river in North Wales where these survivals of the Ancient Britons are still put to a practical and common use; and from Llansantffraid bridge to Llangollen is the stretch upon which these queer craft most often ply.

This however is only in April, when the spring trouting is on, and the river is still strenuous from winter rains and snows. On most mornings, if we should then happen to be about when the early train from Llangollen arrived, we should almost certainly and in due course see a vision of one or more strange-looking unwieldy monsters crawling up towards the bridge from the

station. They would develop eventually into coracles, borne on the backs of their pilots; and the legs under one at least of them would be the stout ones of my friend John Jones, of Llangollen, who is licensed to carry properly-qualified anglers down the eight or nine miles of matchless fairyland through which the river plunges from Llansantffraid to Llantysilio.

Now in a coracle there is just room, with something of a squeeze, for two men to sit abreast, the pilot and the fisherman. The dimensions of the little craft may be four feet by three, and it is contrived out of tarpaulin stretched tight over a wooden frame, the occupants, when there are two, sitting huddled together upon a plank laid across the middle. The sides bulge slightly outward, and the bottom being nearly flat, the boat sits high upon the water, and is swayed like a cork by every wave. The handle of the paddle is fixed in the armpit, its single blade being worked almost entirely under water. The mission of the coracle is to skim down over shallow and turbulent streams, and the art of the paddler is to check its pace, or hold it stationary when required, and, in shooting rapids, to guide it safely between the rocks.

I am sure my reader would feel something of a chill run down his back on beholding a couple of twelve-stone men step gingerly into the tiny canvas tub and float out upon the cold, palpitating bosom of the Dee; for the April of the poet is not often the April of actuality—and of the angler. A dash of snow will as likely as not be shining on the crest and slope of Moel Fernau, and an east wind lashing the willows and shrieking beneath the bridge. But when spring has fairly lit the woods, the five hours' run down on a coracle to Llantysilio is a thing to dream of. When the water is high, and indeed at all times, an element of excitement is added to the charms of the landscape, and the sport of catching trout under conditions that are quite unlike any other in which an angler could find himself.

For the descent of some of the rapids is calculated to make

the stoutest heart quail when unsupported by a knowledge of your pilot's skill, and his power to turn and twist the frail ship as it rushes down through rocks and breakers. Some fishermen, otherwise not unadventurous, cannot be induced to enter a coracle. Some have been satisfied for life with a single experience. This is unreasonable; but is of no consequence here, unless indeed it suggests the reflection that it is a great comfort when you find your skipper to be of the temperance persuasion. For there are many moments in the day when a false stroke or the delay of a second would mean certain disaster, and you would find yourself battling with the waves of the sacred river on your own account, and all your belongings, rod, basket, fish, lunch, macintosh, and the rest of them, well upon their road to Chester.

Many years since there was a skilful coraclist and an expert fisherman upon this water, whom we will call Hugh Williams, and he had not been always, and indeed never did become in honest truth, a total abstainer. He died long ago—peace to his ashes!—and had taken the pledge before I ever travelled with him. This resolution was formed and carried out, I always understood, on account of a certain catastrophe known as "the upsetting of the captain," which had menaced Hugh's position on the river, insomuch as it was not put down to accident, and certainly not to want of science. The redoubtable coraclist, however, had made a mental reservation in taking his oath in favour of port wine, considering it, no doubt, from his high proof point of view, almost non-alcoholic. At any rate, pledge or no pledge, it was an understood thing, I recollect, that Hugh had a couple of glasses of port at the public-house above the bridge before starting. He was wont to declare he could not talk English on cold water, for he was one of those Welshmen whom the force of circumstances, not a taste for languages, had made bilingual to a limited extent, and a very limited extent it was in Hugh's case, and it is quite certain that his native modesty required more coaxing than

ginger-beer was capable of to bring out what Saesoneg he had. It was a case, in fact, of no port no English, and then how would Hugh have been able, as he always did, to point out with great wealth of reminiscence the awesome place where the "upsetting of the captain" took place, and hint with melancholy significance and a much injured air that it was the gallant officer himself, not Hugh, who had lunched not wisely but too well?

And while we are here on the bridge fetching shades out of Hades, I should like to summon back to life and shake hands again with old David Rhys, the river watcher of former days. A big "black Welshman" was David, with the snows of four-score winters on his bushy hair and beard, and the bloom of mountain breezes and good cheer upon his cheeks, when he last pressed the primroses and blue-bells that grow so luxuriantly in the woodlands on Deeside, through which runs the river watcher's path. David was quite a prince in air and manner, and had scarcely as much English as Hugh; but then he was not a teetotaler, and what he had came out fearlessly and free. It was the despair of strangers, honest anglers in waders and brogues, struggling amid the slippery rocks of the Glyndyfrwdy streams, and entirely baffled by the reluctance of Dee trout to respond to their consistent overtures. It was only natural they should consult the old man as to the right fly when he inspected their tickets, looking, as he did, such a thorough sportsman and so wondrous wise. For this query he had one formula, as he looked sagely at their casts. "Yes, indeed! sure, capital! the best!" And so, having given David a shilling, they would return to their struggles in mid-stream, pleased, at any rate, with their prescience in local entomology, and in blissful ignorance that the dear old man scarcely knew an olive dun from a coch-y-bonddu.

But this will never do. I shall be drivelling into fish stories in a minute. Let us on to Corwen with what speed we may along this almost level stretch, where the Irish mail used to

gallop, having in mind the wearisome upward drag between Corwen and Cerrig-y-Druidion, and the drivers of the old Dolgelly coach to race merrily along, knowing full well there were only four more miles of Telford before they swung off westward, at what was then the Druid Inn, and faced the steep pitches of the Bala road. But we are not so pressed as that, and may very well find time as we bowl along to admire the rare beauty of the colouring and the bold features of the steep wall of the Berwyns, which hangs continuously above our left shoulder—now showing a bare front of rock, of cliffs and crags fantastic, springing out of wastes of heather and pines; now softening into slopes of bracken and greensward and feathery birch-trees; now yielding wholly to civilization as some valley farm spreads upward, its lush briery hedges and rich-tinted crops giving way as they draw near the heather, to stone walls and pastures flecked with mountain sheep. I wish we had time to scramble up one of the many streams that come leaping down the hill-sides towards the Dee, and look out from these high ledges over the wild, heath-clad wilderness that rolls southward far into Montgomery, where for miles and miles, a great solitude and silence reign, which are only broken by the plaintive piping of the curlews, the crow of the cock grouse, and the plashing of peaty streams towards the infant Ceiriog. What a contrast, too, is here below, across the valley, where the sunny woods of Rhaggats, alive with rooks and wood-pigeons, clothe the smooth hill-side, and, the old mansion, as a site and an abiding-place, going far back beyond Glyndwr's time, looks down from its green perch over well-timbered lowlands, through which the Dee, no longer pent in rocky gorges, goes spreading in broad and generous channels its silver streams!

Never, surely, was a little town so relentlessly tucked under the dark shoulder of a mountain as Corwen. But then every one knows that its site was selected by no human agency, and that the efforts of its founders to get out into the sunshine were

frustrated after a fashion that no one in the twelfth, or indeed any century, would have ventured to resist. For built into the porch of the church, which is a fine as well as an ancient one, is an immense stone which goes by the euphonious name of Carreg-y-big yn y fach Rewlad—"the pointed stone in the icy nook." It was of no use, the legend says, that the builders of Corwen church, which one need hardly say was the nucleus of Corwen town, began their work on more eligible sites. For it was invariably demolished during the night, and the materials carried by unseen hands to the spot where this big stone lay, and still lies, conspicuous to all who enter here.

So Corwen, as the people of other North Welsh towns are wont to declare with the hyperbole begotten of local rivalry, goes entirely sunless through the winter months. This is a pleasantry beyond a doubt reserved for occasions when Corwen has got the best of them in the matter of an agricultural show or a big preaching function. But it must be admitted that the fir-clad height of Penypigyn looms most threateningly above its roof-trees, and I doubt if there is a town of 3,000 population in the whole island of Britain that grouse fly so near to, and where the twelfth of August is more forcibly brought to the notice of the inhabitants. Indeed every one knows that Glyndwr flung his dagger in a fit of anger from this same Pen Pigyn, and struck the church just above the vestry door, for the mark of the weapon is plain enough to this day for any one who has got eyes in his head to see, and is not a hopeless sceptic. There is not much to say of Corwen. It is an old-fashioned, grey-tinted, Welsh market-town, on which the tourist has made no impress, for he rarely stops there except to eat and drink. There is a wide market-place and a long street running into and out of it, and a few alleys clambering in picturesque fashion up the steep slope of the mountain. There is not much that is attractive in detail, but there is almost nothing to repel, and the tone of the place is genuine and of the soil. It is not the product of slate quarries or flannel

manufactories or tourist interests. It speaks unmistakably of generations of farmers, dealing and chaffering, drinking and voting, and fighting in its streets. The old inn, named from the patron saint of the district the *Owen Glyndwr*, with its back to the churchyard and its front on the market-place, is yet proof against all innovation, and wears the same complexion as when Flood and Grattan, Burke and Clare, Castlereagh or the Iron Duke toasted their toes, as they must almost certainly at some time or another have done, before its cheerful hob.

Like most Welsh market-towns, Corwen is the scene of violent contrasts. There are occasions when the footfall of some nail-shod angler, wending his way riverwards across the empty market-square, seems to wake its uttermost echoes, and the ping of a bicycle bell to make the whole place jump. And then again within twenty-four hours you may find yourself pushing your way with difficulty through surging crowds gathered for a cattle fair, a preaching conference, or an Eisteddfod. It is surprising how strongly a countryside of fifty-acre farmers musters in the market-town on fair-days and festivals. In regions where tenants hold five hundred, speaking broadly, the other occupants of the soil, being labourers, have no particular inducement to foregather in market-places, having nothing, as a rule, to buy or sell, or personal interest in current prices, even if they had the time and were themselves masters of it.

Corwen on a monthly fair-day, then, presents a very different sight from that exhibited upon an average summer afternoon. And, above all, in spring or autumn, when the grass is coming or going and big movements of stock mark the period, a more characteristic scene, and one more truly Welsh, would be impossible to imagine. Every street and open spot in the town, and indeed the roads for quite a distance out, present a wild confusion of black cattle and shouting drivers, through which goes a steady stream of traffic—carts, droves of ponies, bands of

mountain sheep half crazy with excitement, farmers' traps, old women in donkey-carts laden with poultry, all forcing their way, amid much Welsh and great cracking of whips and sticks, through the bellowing steaming sea of horns.

Corwen taps a big country, and on such a day as this there are men and stock from every part of it—From the head of the Vale of Clwyd, whither we are shortly going, and from the great uplands between here and Wrexham, known generally in olden days as the Lordship of Yale, from the Vales of Llangollen and Glyndyfrdwy we have just traversed, and from the richer and scarcely less beautiful Vale of Edeyrnion, through which the Dee comes down from Bala Lake, and which, unhappily, we cannot follow—Hither too come men and women from the narrow far-winding gorges, through which the Alwen and the Geirw tumble their pellucid streams over rumbling water wheels, past villages with fearsome names, and white-washed grey-roofed homesteads. A world of small farmers, with few exceptions, is all about you here whichever way you look—men with ten to twenty black cattle in the valley pastures and a hundred or so sheep upon the hill—a democracy, in fact, with a language of its own, and one may almost say in the prevalence of Nonconformity, a faith of its own, emphasises and cements.

To say that you can contemplate the North Welsh farmer at a Corwen cattle fair to a greater advantage than anywhere else, than at Ruthin or Llanrwst or Bala or Machynlleth, for instance, would be, of course, absurd, seeing that North Wales, with scarcely an exception, is solid in its nationality—to use a convenient expression. But Corwen, as a town, is so absolutely untouched by any alien influence, it makes a singularly harmonious background for such characteristic scenes as this. A hardy, wholesome, well-grown person, I am sure, would be your verdict on the North Welsh agriculturist. I have called him a fifty-acre farmer. Perhaps eighty would more nearly

represent the scale, which best describes him. But this, after all, is merely to stamp him as a working farmer, who lives frugally, and employs but little labour outside his own immediate family, and that little only intermittently. His dress is plain enough, but neat and tidy, though tending somewhat to funereal hues, as might be expected in a crowd where so many are deacons of Methodist or Baptist chapels. The Welsh farmer is somewhat of an austere being—theoretically at any rate—indeed he could not well be otherwise, and a sense of humour is not his strong point; but on a fair-day he certainly throws off something of his solemnity, though, to be sure, the "cwrw da" is circulating with a somewhat generous torrent at such a festival; and, with so many bargains going on, the Celtic excitability is very much in evidence. The hand-clasp is, in Wales, the outward symbol of a cemented bargain, and, though this would seem to suggest nothing humorous, it is funny to see, as you sometimes may, a couple of men twirling round a bunch of bullocks or a dry cow, with their respective right hands poised in the air, and discussing, with immense emotion, the contentious half-crown that keeps them there.

It does seem strange that a people, in whose veins not a drop of Saxon blood flows worth mentioning, should not show a type of face that one can definitely say distinguishes them from their Saxon neighbours, like the Irish Celts, for instance, who have any amount of English blood in them. I well know that people amuse themselves with thinking otherwise, and sometimes take the matter seriously. For myself I can only say that I have tried my hardest, and without avail, to imagine what sort of a face it would be that, if I saw it in Norwich or Plymouth, would cause me to exclaim, "There's a Welshman!" There are "black Welshmen" and "red Welshmen," to be sure; so are there black Englishmen and red Englishmen. The people of North Wales, too, are a bigger and finer lot than those of

the South ; but this in no way affects the question. And yet, curiously enough, the peasant-women, in middle age, seem to me to develop a type so uniform and so prevalent that it is sometimes impossible to believe that a casual group of them are not all members of a single family. And a very good type it is, too—a sallow or slightly brown firm, capable face, with a good jaw, black eyebrows, and dark resolute-looking eyes, that give one the idea of being able to light with passion somewhat easily, and make one think, somehow, of those Welshwomen of old who did such wild work on Saxon corpses after Mortimer's defeat at Pilleth.

This suggestion, however, is an outrageous libel on the good ladies who bring their butter and chickens into Corwen market from the valleys of Denbigh and Merioneth. The tall hats, I need not say, have long disappeared. Caermarthen market, twenty-five years ago, saw the last of them ; but the Welshwoman still has a distinct look about her headgear. She is given to wearing somewhat masculine hats of felt or straw, wearing them not seldom, over a white cap. But this is, perhaps, rather among the most humble class. The farmer's wife, too, though her husband may only hold fifty or a hundred acres, comes into preaching or market almost always in a trap of some sort, and, as one knows well, this is a matter of thrift, not of display it is a pleasant thing to note. A country of small farmers surely breeds an admirable race of women ! They are lifted above the squalor and the hopelessness of the farm-labourer's life, and yet, on the other hand, not, as a class, tempted to become social hybrids. They may have to work hard, and even live hard, but they have independence, at any rate, and a settled home, and a good position in the rustic democracy, and, so long as the rent is paid, may reasonably count, in Wales, of seeing their home remain indefinitely in the family, and their children's children succeed them. As to the maidens of North Wales, they show beyond a doubt a high average of comeliness, and those of Merioneth must surely

bear off the palm since an Anglesey bard, with noble impartiality, long ago awarded it to them.

> Full fair the Gleisiad [1] in the flood
> That sparkles 'neath the summer sun ;
> And fair the thrush in green abode
> Spreading her wings in sportive fun ;
> But fairer far if truth be told
> The maids of county Merion.

We must not, however, forget the dealers at Corwen Fair. For though, to the casual observer, they and their unlovely Midland English would be utterly swamped in the Celtic clamour, they are far the most important people there. The black cattle trade with England is as old as Glyndwr, and a great deal older. But there is no one to raid Corwen on fair-days now, and the cattle go eastward on trains, and not before the points of lances. Wolverhampton, Leicester, and Reading seem always strongly represented ; but the Englishmen do not have it all their own way, for even in Corwen there is an enterprising Welshman who deals so largely that he is not satisfied with Welsh pastures, but holds land in Essex, which I have no doubt he picks up cheap enough.

In the stage-coach period, when the road to London was a thing of life, the Welsh drover, raising its dust with his herds of black cattle and ponies, was a prominent feature of the traffic. Barnet Fair in September, one of the largest in England, was always wound up with a Welsh drovers' race, who competed for a saddle and bridle provided by public subscription, and rode the ponies on which they had travelled up to town. The riders, says Mr. Harris, in his *Coaching Age*, were in shirt-sleeves, and wore handkerchiefs tied round their heads ; sometimes they had saddles, sometimes none, and occasionally rode their mounts on halters only. "The shouting and jabbering in Welsh at the start was something terrific," says the same authority, "there generally being about ten or a dozen runners,

[1] Sea trout.



"A Welsh drovers' race"

and, as they came into the straight run to the winning-post, the cattle dealers followed immediately on their horses, galloping up the course as hard as they could go, all shouting." The dealers, then, it appears used to start off for a race upon their own account, shouting and yelling at the top of their voices as they pushed their unaccustomed animals along the stretch to the winning-post. It was altogether a scene, says Mr. Harris, that defies description, and certainly one characteristic of times that are gone.

CHAPTER VI

CORWEN—RUTHIN

Corwen possesses quite a busy little station: for the Great Western, on its road to Dolgelly and Barmouth, is here met by a branch of the London and North-Western coming from Rhyl, Chester and Denbigh down the Vale of Clwyd. All parts, therefore, of the country, north of the Dee Valley, are in touch with one another, this central route being linked to the sea-coast, not only by the Clwyd railway, but by a line connecting Bala with Festiniog and Conway. Between this Dee Valley, however, and Mid Wales lies a great gulf, or rather a stupendous barrier, not only lofty, but broad and broken. For the Berwyn mountains, lifting their rounded heath-clad summits nearer and nearer to the skies, as they roll westward, meet the still loftier Arans beyond Bala Lake, and the Arans in their turn give place to Cader Idris, whose further shoulders dip into the sea. Nursed amid this chaos of hills, which tumbles away southward from behind the great Berwyn ridge, lie villages, innumerable and remote. They are rarely visited by holiday travellers, and their outlet lies for the most part towards the valleys of the Severn and the Vyrnwy.

Should a farmer, or a parson, however, from this transmontine country be compelled to visit Bala or Corwen, he can get through, it is true, at more than one place over perpendicular

and indifferent roads. But for all practical purposes the folk who dwell beyond the Berwyn belong to another world. If you lived upon the banks of the Dee, and had friends a dozen miles to the southward, they might almost as well be in America for anything you would ever see of them. However numerous on the other hand, your acquaintances in North Wales might be, if you frequented Corwen station with sufficient perseverance, you would be almost certain to meet them all in the course of the year, and have moreover, an opportunity, of enjoying their society at times for quite prolonged periods. But the efforts of the railway companies to grapple with the spasmodic traffic of North Wales should not in truth be made subject of jest, for they are wholly praiseworthy, and bid fair to be entirely successful.

But we must leave old Corwen nestling beneath its sombre hill, with the pale blue smoke-wreaths of its chimneys curling against the dark fir-clad background of Penypigyn, only pausing ourselves for a few moments to take leave of the Dee as we cross it in the meadows beyond the town, and head for the North and the Vale of Clwyd.

Corwen Bridge is as old and as beautiful in its way as its neighbour of Llansantffraid, has shaken to twenty times its volume of travel, and the glamour of the coaching period lies thick upon its hoary parapets. What a peep up the river there is too from the centre of its six deep arches! Even the most feverish cyclist, who has breakfasted in Manchester, lunched at Llangollen, and intends to dine at Barmouth, slows down somewhat as he crosses the backbone of the old bridge, and catches sight of the broad glint of the water shining and sparkling for a full half-mile in a straight reach, till the bordering woodlands draw together in the distance, and the foam of a far-off salmon pool catches the sun. We shall look upon many sights before we have done, grander and greater than this sweet Vale of Edeyrnion, but on no river at once so broad and bright and sparkling, and of such high renown in song and story.

So we will take a last look at the spreading, rippling, pebbly shallows above the bridge, where the big grayling are feeding, and on the deep swirling pool below the central arches, where the salmon rest in autumn on their way to Bala, and the small trout are even now splashing at the summer gnats.

As we begin to face the northern bank of the valley, we take leave, not only of the Dee, but, to our sorrow also, of Telford's famous road. We shall meet it again later on, but in the meantime it has to shape its course for the Conway river, climbing up the valleys of the Alwen and the Geirw, and cleaving for many miles the treeless table-lands of Cerrig-y-druidion and Cernioge, the terror of old-time coach drivers and their passengers when snowstorms were blowing from the north and west.

Looking back over our shoulder, we can see upon a high bank, above the shingly flats where the Alwen meets the Dee, the ancient disused church of Llangar. The same weird things, says an ancient legend, happened to its builders as to those of St. Suliens at Corwen—the materials they had laid by day being removed by night. At last they were supernaturally warned to seek a spot where they should spring a white deer. The quest being successful, the church was erected upon the spot, without further hindrance and called Llan-carw-Gwyn, the church of the white stag—hence Llangar. At the adjoining village of Cynwyd, Pennant tells us, the great men of the valley in primitive times used to meet and settle the boundaries of their estates, preserving records of the same. But on one fatal occasion, says Mr. Askew Roberts, these jovial squires caroused so long and so hilariously, or the cwrw da was so insidiously potent, that the function terminated with a general bonfire of the precious documents. In those days men counted their acres by hundreds, not, as in these, by thousands, and the complications that ensued may be left to the imagination.

Upon our right, however, is a far more important landmark, the high green hill of Caer Drewyn, around whose crest goes

circling that wonderful rampart of loose stones, which antiquaries regard as one of the most precious prehistoric monuments in Wales. Controversy rages fiercely enough around these old hill-top fortresses. Whether they are the work of Picts or Irish retiring before the advancing Cymry in the fifth century, or of unclassified races two thousand years earlier, we can at least permit ourselves to wonder at the labour that could raise such a mighty wall as this must have been for a full half-mile circuit. Where the rocks are naked and bare of sod, as in this case, they appeal perhaps all the more forcibly to the layman in such matters. It is not, however, quite so suggestive as the still more perfect town, on the summit of "the Rivals," where the round huts, the "Cytiau Gwyddelod" (Irishmen's huts) are so numerous and perfect; but the rampart is an immense one, and the area protected several acres in extent. The first thought, however, that occurs to one in looking on such works as these is the water problem. As permanent defences the want of water seems to break into every theory; for it was not only men and women, but cattle also, that had here to find their refuge in times of stress. Caer Drewyn, however, has other and less misty associations, which, I am afraid, appeal to me even more than these mysterious stones. For the great Owen Gwynedd, with all the forces of North and South Wales, fell back on this commanding hill after that fierce battle of Crogen, which we took note of at Chirk. Here he lay for a long time, while the English army, till then victorious, shivered and starved just across the valley upon the Berwyn height behind Corwen. Woods blew all along the mountain sides in those days, and thickets of willow and alder bristled in the valleys. Henry could not move a single company of his powerful army forward for fear of being "ambushed by the Welsh," who knew every brake and every grove and ford. So, after losing many men and his own short temper entirely, he had, like the rest of them, to go home again – his rearguard fighting all the way—and leave the Welsh to their own devices. It must have been a brave sight,

though, those thirty or forty thousand men clustering on either hill; for this had been no foray, but a supreme effort on both sides. Knights and Barons and great Earls from every part of England and even France looked down upon the Dee from one ridge, while upon the other were mustered a gathering of Cambrian chieftains from North and South, such as was only seen at long intervals when some great and strong ruler had arisen.

The road to Wrexham—and a long road it is—leaves us here for the east, as we ourselves turn to the north, and clambers up and down for many miles through the windy uplands of Bryn Eglwys and the old Lordship of Yale-in-Powys. There are still Yales at Plas-yn-Yale, and the fact may be noted, because it was from this region that the Pilgrim Father went forth to New England whose son, Elihu Yale, gave his name, through his benefactions, to the now celebrated American University. This particular Yale returned to England, and gained afterwards some distinction and much wealth as an official in the East Indies. It is said he brought back so many treasures that he was at his wits end where to store them all, and so held an auction, a new thing altogether in those days. He lies in the beautiful church of Wrexham, whither many Americans, as is only meet and right, wend their way to pay their respects to his dust, and over this upon a tombstone his career is thus briefly and quaintly epitomized—

> "Born in America: in Europe bred,
> In Africa travelled, and in India wed,
> Where long he lived and thrived: at London dead."

Why American pilgrims stop short at this point I do not know, for ten miles up the road, in the curious and ancient little church of Bryn Eglwys is a transept known as the Yale Chapel, and devoted from time immemorial to the use of the owners of Plas yn Yale. This may be truly said, in a sense, to be the source from which the American University derived its name.

In the body of the church a small congregation of hill-farmers as their fathers before them have done for centuries, worship in the vernacular, and I have often thought what amazement and what strange emotions would stir the breast of a Yale graduate if he could be transported of a sudden across the Atlantic and dropped down some Sunday afternoon into this time-battered, weather-beaten fane, looking out from its green ridge upon the everlasting hills, as the rustic choir were breaking into the *Magnificat:* "Fy enaid a fawrhâ yr Arglwydd: a'm hyspryd a lawenychodd yn Nuw fy Iachawdwr."

But this digression is scarcely legitimate, and we have unwittingly passed by the ancient seat of Rûg, lying to the left among its parks and woods, and not even glanced at its old chapel by the roadside, built before the civil war by a Salusbury, and full of old carving and quaint devices. Rûg is a spot notable to Welshmen as being the scene of the treacherous seizure of Gryffydd ap Cynan, King of North Wales, who had recently won a great victory over the Normans at Carno. He was carried off by Lupus, Earl of Chester, and kept there in durance vile, and loaded with chains, for twelve years. At last, a young hero from this neighbourhood, while the castle guards were feasting and rioting, managed to gain access to his majesty, and carried him off upon his back, chains and all. But Rûg has an even greater claim to fame, for it was its then owner, Salusbury, of illustrious name, who purchased from Henry the Fourth the confiscated lands of Glyndwr. Two hundred and fifty years later, as we shall presently see, a Salusbury was still at Rûg, the stoutest of all Welsh Cavaliers, save one, perhaps, in the civil wars.

It is a pleasant enough ride this through the green winding gorge which cleaves the Denbigh hills to the head waters of the Clwyd, and a road leads us thither, which we should call good, if Telford had not somewhat spoilt us. The pretty village of Gwyddelwern, once the manor of Glyndwr's brother, Tudor, who fought and fell so valorously, pours out from its

open school doors a flood of chubby urchins, who air the English they have learnt, or tried to learn, within in spasmodic fashion at our expense. The Welsh juvenile is not so polite as the Welsh adult. He is inclined to heave bricks, or at least opprobrious epithets, at the passing stranger who is so situated that retaliation is unlikely. The racial difference as represented by the language strikes the infantile mind perhaps more forcibly than when years have brought discretion and tolerance, and the natural Celtic grace has asserted itself. A tasteful new church, too, with a quite ambitious spire, here arrests the attention, as such spectacles in out-of-the-way Welsh villages are unusual.

The hills on either side of us are brightly chequered with well-cropped fields of grain and seeds and clover, merging in their higher altitudes into sheep pastures or brakes of gorse. Stone homesteads of various tones from white to grey are dotted about in pleasant and neighbourlike propinquity. Rural life here wears a cheery and picturesque face. It is the glory indeed of Wales that the grandeur of its highlands is not gained at the expense of its lowland charms. The crudeness and harshness of farming life so common in North Britain, has here no place. The miserable wire fence, the skimpy, close-clipped thorn hedge, the forty-acre fallow, the factory-like steading, has no counterpart. The Welsh farm-house seems conscious of no effort to look snug and pleasant, or to harmonise with the landscape, but nevertheless it does all these things with much success. The stone-work in this soft western climate soon takes on the tones of age. The small, thick, narrow slates, much used of old in Welsh rural buildings, get quickly mellowed by the touch of time and assume artistic curves, or rather the oaken rafters beneath them do, which, even when the mosses have not gathered, make Welsh roofs welcome and pleasing objects in a foreground. Whitewash, when applied in the ruthless fashion of Anglesey to walls and roofs and chimneys, is not a thing to be desired, though no

architecture could either mend or mar the monotony of the treeless, fertile ridges of the sacred isle of Mona, the mother of Wales. But whitewash, used with discretion, is to my thinking a happy element in a landscape, lighting up so vividly the greens and reds of woodland field and fallow. And in Wales it is often varied, as in France, by a touch of colour, of blue, or pink, or saffron round the doors and windows, which might not look well if laid on with three coats of paint in Regent Street, but splashed about in simple peasant fashion, with a cluster of roses or a row of sunflowers blowing in front of it, and a canopy of beech or ash leaves fluttering overhead and a mountain stream plashing underneath, is quite another matter. Welsh homesteads in short do not look as if they had come out of Stephen's *Book of the Farm*, or were the result of plans submitted in a prize essay to an enterprizing agricultural society.

Twenty years ago I should not have ventured to talk such rank heresy as this, or to flaunt the picturesque in the face of the practical after such irreverent fashion. But the picturesque is now paying good rents, and the scientific and the practical have made a mess of the landscape, it seems, to little purpose. The pendulum has swung round. It is the small farms now that let, the smaller farmers who pay their rent. Where are the Solons of the sixties and seventies, and the tons upon tons of literature they produced to show that in big farms alone lay the glory and the future of British agriculture? Worse than all, where are the buildings and the fences that in many districts they swept away? Prodigious ostriches, too, were some of these wise men, who would not or could not see the coming rise of wages and the certain fall of grain. Full of pride in their steam-cultivated, tile-drained fallows, they forgot that the cheap lands of America and the pauper labour of the Orient, not Norfolk and the Lothians, were going to feed the world. How long it took them to recognise the handwriting upon the wall, and even then what columns of consolatory figures

were produced, upon the lines of Norfolk or the Lothians, to prove that the working farmer of Manitoba could not grow wheat under this price or under that! All theory and moonshine mostly, as time has proved. What is the good of charging a man who does all his own work, and owns his homestead, and can't get away from it, so much an acre for ploughing, and so much for harrowing, and interest on his money, and all the rest of it? He may be reduced to living on a labourer's wages, or less, but then he never actually lived otherwise. His margin which he formerly saved may all, it is true, have gone, but he still worries along, and grows wheat at even eighteen-pence a bushel, grumpily no doubt, but still he lives and delves, profoundly unconscious that he is a financial paradox according to figures based apparently on the supposition that he sits upon a horse and runs his farm upon commercial lines and pays out big sums of money every week.

To some extent all this applies to the farms and farmers of Wales—to the once-despised "small men" of methods comparatively primitive and of horny hands. Their margin too, no doubt, has mostly vanished, but they also live and pay their rent besides, and when a farm is vacant there is no lack of applicants. How indeed are the mighty fallen! It was once a fine thing to be a landlord in Lincolnshire or Suffolk. Thirty shillings an acre is now ten, and sometimes nothing. But now it is a fine thing to be a landlord in Wales—for twenty-five shillings is still twenty-three and more too, 7 per cent. being officially declared to represent the difference between the palmiest of times and these. What to the landowner, however, must be a source of even greater comfort is the freedom he enjoys from the dread bogey of derelict farms. Tenants, as a general thing, have been very stationary in North Wales, continuing often for generations. When a farm is vacant there is strong competition and great workings of the oracle, and sometimes much exercise of the wile of which Taffy is supposed to be possessed. Wheat is but little grown outside

Anglesey and the Vale of Clwyd, the breeding of cattle and sheep being the principal business of the farmer. Few of them, however, are now making much more than a living, and the Welsh farmer lives hard and frugally.

But even upon these terms there are always plenty of men who would sooner farm than emigrate or go into business. For one thing, the Welshman loves his country with a greater love than the average Saxon, who, though possessed of much pride of race, is not greatly afflicted with nostalgia. The Welshman, moreover, is hampered somewhat by his language from distant adventure, and, to a greater degree than an Englishman could readily believe, by the exceeding strong tie in which his chapel as a social, apart from any religious, influence, holds him.

Then, again, he pays his way at farming by methods which would wholly upset the calculations of such agricultural accountants as those to whom I have alluded. He lives with exceeding frugality, and does most of his own work, his boys, if he have any, labouring for him, often without wages, far into manhood. And indeed this is a commonly discussed grievance in North Wales. On the other hand, being chiefly a stock-farmer, the Welshman is not altogether a slave to the plough the harrow and the hoe. Much of his time is spent in looking after his sheep and cattle, and he has a full share of the joys of market, fair, and meeting. He will usually, however, have some labour at hay-time, keeping it on till after harvest. Outside a few special districts there can scarcely indeed be said to be any regular order of farm-labourers in North Wales. Those who work out as such are chiefly the superfluous or independent sons of farmers; while in the hay to harvest season, they are increased by migratory bands of workmen who at other seasons follow other jobs.

The price of labour is a sore subject with the Welsh farmer nowadays. Wales is such a busy little country, with its quarries and mines and sea-coast trade, to say nothing of its tourist

traffic, that no one but a hopeless loafer is ever out of work, and wages have greatly stiffened, 22*s.* to 26*s.* a week, besides maintenance, being the common rate for the eight or ten weeks' summer hiring.

This competition for farms in Wales, and the causes which lead to it, were put forward as the reason for the Government Land Commission which a few years ago created such a stir and pother in the Principality. It was a political move, in the first instance, of the Radical party; but the informal charges against the Welsh landlords were so violent that the squires, in their turn, became zealous for the opportunity to vindicate themselves.

It was granted, as we all know, and as even the Welsh popularists themselves admit in their confidential moments, this precious Commission resulted in something like a triumph for the squires, and practically in nothing more. Many people in England felt not unnaturally a little sore that, at a time when agricultural ruin was staring whole counties in the face—as, so far as I can see, it still stares them—the least critical part of Britain should be selected for Government solicitude and Government money. It seemed amazingly paradoxical that while thousands of acres in England were lying derelict from an absolute incapacity to give a profit to anybody, a region that produced the least threatened products, that was beyond all question paying its way, and was economically arranged for the most prolonged resistance to the new conditions, should absorb official sympathy, while untold sums were surely sinking into the abysmal clays of Lincolnshire and Essex. It seemed to many a very poor joke. To a vast number of Welshmen, however, it was a very good joke indeed, inasmuch as its Courts, while they sat, afforded unceasing refreshment to good-humoured audiences in various places, that were accustomed to count the monthly cattle fairs and the protracted Methodist meetings as the limit of their dissipations.

Taffy, it would be idle to deny, does not take the witness-

box as seriously as he should do, and the Land Commission promised to provide a good deal of sport for the frivolously-minded; and I do not think they were disappointed. At any rate, nobody was hurt, though there was a good deal of money spent, and the public-houses had an excellent time of it. It was proved to those who did not know it before that, upon the whole, Welsh landlords were good landlords, and that, though beyond a doubt the demand for land was stimulated by the stay-at-home proclivities of the Welsh peasantry, as well as by their thrift and frugality, the squires had not, as a class, taken advantage of this to force up rents. There had been a few political evictions a quarter of a century before, as there had been in England and Scotland. Indeed, in the latter country, there were many very notable ones, as I well remember being myself, so to speak, present at the most memorable of all. It was also shown to strangers, who took the trouble to read the evidence, that the Welsh landlords did all the improvements, as in England, that they were generally Welshmen by blood, and that between Wales and Ireland there was not, as some enthusiastic outsiders had supposed, any agricultural parallel. On the contrary, England and Wales, however they may differ in other respects, in their landlord and tenant relationships are economically one country; nor is there any more or any less absenteeism than obtains in Devonshire or Cheshire. To create, then, the doubtful and expensive blessing of a land court, or in other words to make a landowner a mere rent-charger, and thereby deprive him of all his interest in his property, and put a premium on absenteeism for no good reason, would surely strike most people as somewhat feckless. But when, upon the top of this, it is remembered that the Welsh landlord does all the improvements, such proposals begin to take the shape of a conundrum, and as one that will not, I fancy, be brought up for solution in our time, we may safely "give it up."

The report issued by the Commission, after taking evidence for many months from squires, agents, and tenants, is immensely

interesting. The potential reader not concerned with estate matters need have no fears of being over-bored by them. I was going to say they come at the end, but this would be too strong. He will find a most admirable and lucid history of the primitive races of Wales and the Pre-Norman period most graphically handled, and a vast amount of useful information concerning the Romans, Picts, Saxons, Strathclyde-Britons, tribal customs, Druids, saints, tumuli, stone huts, and eisteddfodau. This one should be really thankful for; but it is the least that could be expected, seeing that two or more very distinguished antiquaries were withdrawn from their dignified retirement to sit on the Commission, and weigh evidence on black cattle, leases, and drain-tiles. One at least is suspected of being something of a humourist. A popular tale runs that, after suffering in silence for several days, much technical evidence and counter evidence, he suddenly bestirred himself and wanted to know of his brother-Commissioners and the Court generally, "what the deuce the whole thing was about." This is possibly a gross exaggeration or perhaps a mere pleasantry, but it is an earnest of the more or less humorous view that a very large proportion of educated Welshmen of all parties came to take of the Commission.

But the shapely hills of the Clwydian range are now in sight. We are dropping down the long slope of Brynsaithmarchog—a formidable array of letters, in truth, for a country post-office, and it looks prodigiously so writ large upon a white board over the door, within which ribbons, stockings, and postage-stamps may be secured in most commonplace and prosaic fashion. But a world of meaning lies hidden from the ordinary passer-by in those mystic letters—"*The hill of the Seven Knights*,"[1] no more nor less. For it was here that Glyndwr is said to have encountered Lord Grey of Ruthin on the memorable occasion when he overcame and took him prisoner, with seven of his warriors. Fame at any rate declares this is the spot

[1] More probably the Seven Knights of Christendom,

which witnessed the shock of battle between these historic foes.

The railway, with its single track, runs inoffensively along the narrow valley, and infrequent trains at long intervals wake the echoes of the hills as they pursue their leisurely way towards Corwen or Denbigh. The grass is long in the meadows; the oak woods, in their first fresh dress, ripple in the summer wind; the infant Clwyd is already raising its childish prattle among the bushes, till, rushing into the open beneath a stone bridge, it goes on its way rejoicing, and we after it, through the wide pastures of Nant Clwyd, and, breaking through the rocky gorge of Eyarth, lands us actually at the head of the famous vale. The garden of North Wales is this, renowned not so much for its romantic beauty, like Conway or Llangollen, though it is beautiful enough, but for its smoothness and fertility and abounding country life. "As rich as Dyffryn Clwyd," says the Welsh farmer in far Carnarvon or outer Merioneth when waxing eulogistic over the qualities of some field or pasture; and yet Dyffryn Clwyd is to-day perhaps the least prosperous part of North Wales.

We are down on level ground, and three miles from Ruthin. The Clwydian mountains spring high upon our right, and roll away towards the sea, the peaks of Fenlli and Fammau and Arthur conspicuous above the rest. Upon our left the green slopes and winding glens lead upwards through Cyffylliog and Clocaenog to the purple table-land, the silent wilderness of the Hiraethog, where fairies dance beside the banks of lonely lakes, and belated travellers see uncanny sights, and packs of white dogs with red ears go howling through the mist on the track of phantom deer, and relics of the prehistoric age lie strewn on every side. The Holyhead mail in the last century once crossed this ten miles of grouse moor, so there is still a good road from Denbigh to Pentre Voelas (16 miles), which the cyclist who would cultivate solitude of the most profound description, and is not afraid of a prodigious climb to reach

it, would do well to follow. We unhappily cannot follow it, but must push on past the white homesteads and manor-houses and old churches and fat fields of Dyffryn Clwyd, to the ancient market town of Ruthin.

The great red castle, Castell Goch y Gwernfon, as the old Welsh called it, is well marked by the impressive modern towers that rise above its ruins; but it is not till you are within the grounds that you can properly appreciate the might and strength and significance of the old Norman fortress. Both town and castle stand upon a high ridge. The old portion of the former, which Glyndwr burnt, including the market-place which he raided, crowns its crest, and many quaint old buildings, some of black and white timber, some of stone, and dark inside with oak wainscoting and rich carving, straggle along in feudal fashion towards the turreted castle gates. Within these, the gardens and grounds of the modern mansion are woven in with the old ruin. The ramparts are paved terraces bordered with flowers. Well-ordered turf mats upon the deep moat beneath the massive walls, and rustling groves of oak and ash cover the steep green slopes where Welsh and Norman arrows once whistled, and in later days Cromwellian cannons roared. The long armoury, where pikes and spears and battle-axes and bows and arquebuses each in their turn were stacked, is now open to the breeze and laden with the scent of flowers. The dungeon alone brings back the horrors which men faced who went out in those days to battle. One wonders indeed, on descending into these abysmal pits, whether the people of that day had hearts at all—whether the milk of human kindness had utterly dried up; whether family affection even could have existed when such things were tolerated, nay enjoyed, and men and women eat and drank and sang and made merry with human beings of their own class and kind, and often of their own kin, festering in chains in these noisome vaults beneath their feet.

Ruthin Castle, like all the other Welsh strongholds, held for

the King in the Civil War, and, like Denbigh and Conway, though before both of them, surrendering to the Welsh Cromwellian general, Mytton. There was both a fortress here and a town, of sorts, no doubt, before the Edwardian conquest, but the real interest of Ruthin dates from its grant by the first Edward, in the memorable year 1282, to the Greys, and the building of its Norman castle coevally with those of Harlech, Carnarvon, Conway, and Denbigh. It was one of the tokens of the final conquest. Under its shadow, as under that of the others, a walled town was founded, and peopled with Anglo-Norman adventurers, who conducted for generations an exclusive trade under privileges that were sustained by royal charters, till, with the genuine pacification of Wales in the Tudor period, when a prince of their own blood came to the throne, the racial barrier broke down. In Pennant's time several old "garrison" families were still landowners—Thelwalls, Ashpools, Towerbridges, and others. But this distinguishing feature of the Vale of Clwyd will grow more marked at Denbigh, as we descend the stream.

The Court rolls of the Norman period at Ruthin are preserved to us, and it is curious to note how, amid the ruthless cruelty and the bloodshed of that period, petty legal actions are so keenly and ceremoniously engaged in. Stealing stock at night seems to have been a frequent cause of litigation, but even pasturing cattle surreptitiously on other people's land was quite a common bone of contention in the courts, so of course were debts, as well as selling bad grain and goods. One indignant citizen we find in the 14th century suing his laundress for a missing coat, and the laundress taking her affidavit that it "slipped from her possession she knows not how," and fined accordingly.

Ruthin is a quaint and quiet little town, only breaking out, like Corwen, into periods of excitement at cattle fairs and protracted meetings of Baptists and Methodists. The footprint of King Arthur is here, and a big stone, Maen Huail, in the market-



Ruthin Castle.

place records the spot where he beheaded a troublesome subject of that name. From the high ridge occupied by the market-place you may see hills and mountains picturesquely framed upon either side of you between the roofs of the steep-dropping streets. Like many other old towns, too, in Wales, the church, though quite a distinguished and ancient pile, is but a chapel to the little church at Llanrhydd, a mile from the town. The imagination quails before the personalities that identify themselves with these ancient little foundations. Llanrhydd, for instance, is dedicated to St. Mengan, who was the family doctor of Vortigern, the friend of Merlin. And Vortigern, it will be remembered, was the ill-advised King of Britain who invited the Saxons over in the fifth century to its ultimate destruction, and died an obscure and embittered death long after he had found, to his cost, that they were not philanthropists, by the storm-beaten shores of West Carnarvonshire. It seems, therefore, almost bathos to say that the chief feature of Llanrhydd church is a quaint monument of the sixteenth century to the once powerful family of the Thelwalls of Bathafarn. The lady, with four daughters, kneels upon one side of an altar. Upon the other is the squire, with no less than ten sons behind him. Seven of them, we learn, lived to a good old age, the eldest being ninety-seven when he died, and leaving behind him the respectable total of 250 descendants. And yet there are no Thelwalls left! Three of the figures on this curious monument carry skulls, to signify their lives were short, while five of them wear robes.

Ruthin church, however, as I have said, is an imposing one, of the perpendicular style, and well worth seeing, with a finely-decorated roof. It is a collegiate foundation, built and endowed by the Greys early in their reign. The old monastic quarters adjoining the edifice make a most picturesque and academic-looking rectory, though as a matter of fact the incumbent of St. Peter's bears the more dignified title of Warden. Close to this are the old buildings of the grammar-school which is now

lodged in much more pretentious quarters a mile or so out in the country. The greatest ecclesiastical worthy in Ruthin history is Goodman, a member of one of the Anglo-Norman garrison families. He was Dean of Westminster, and a considerable personage in his day. A long row of almshouses, facing the churchyard, testify to his local benefactions and keep his memory green. So Ruthin, for a little Welsh town of a couple of thousand or so of population, boasts not only of its past feudal grandeur, but of considerable ecclesiastical distinction. Its church, moreover, was under financial obligations to say perpetual masses for the souls of Edward the First and Eleanor, his wife, as well as for those of Reginald de Grey and Matilda, the first chatelaine of the Castle, which was still in good repair in the days when old Churchyard was cultivating his crabbed muse—

> "The castle stands on rocke much like red brick,
> The dykes are cut with toole through stony crags,
> The towers are hye, the walls are large and thicke
> The work itself would shake a subject's bagge."

CHAPTER VII

RUTHIN—DENBIGH

The Vale of Clwyd, here at Ruthin, may be three miles across. At its mouth, between Rhyl and St. Asaph, twenty miles below, it is perhaps twice that width, or even more. Its eastern wall is sharply defined by the Clwydian mountains: and though these are devoid of the naked crags with which the more sombre sides of the Berwyns are so often plated, they nevertheless leap up and down in bold and eager fashion as they trend towards the sea, Moel Fammau reaching the respectable height of 1,800 feet, and its satellites not falling far behind it in point either of altitude or outline. The yellow bloom of the gorse, it is true, is more conspicuous upon their slopes than the brown and purple of the heather, and sheep are much more numerous than grouse, for the range is a narrow one, but a single hill thick, in fact. Once you have clambered through one or other of its passes and dropped down upon the further side, you are among the fantastic limestone ridges and burrowing streams of Western Flint—a country wholly Welsh, and in itself picturesque enough, but giving place in almost no time to the smoke-polluted levels of Mold and the dull plains of Cheshire.

The western wall of the Vale is not nearly so sharply marked. The slope towards the Hiraethog is much more gradual, valley

rising above valley, ridge above ridge. But the ground over which we are now running upon an admirable road is level enough, and suggestive rather of England than of Wales in the larger enclosures and bigger homesteads that lie upon either hand. Wheat fields are just bursting into ear, Herefords and Shorthorn cattle are sharing the pastures with the black Welshmen that have been so continuously with us ever since we left Llangollen. Shropshire and Oxford Downs have taken the place of the small mountain sheep, which must be now looked for among the wild hills to the right and left.

I have said it is a good thing to be a Welsh landlord. This would not wholly apply to the Vale of Clwyd, which may seem a paradoxical remark, seeing that it is the garden of North Wales. But then it has been more definitely a tillage country, and, though its people are as Celtic in blood and speech and prejudice and religion and all the rest of it as those of Merioneth, the system of life in some respect has run rather more on English lines; and as in the palmy days of agriculture the Vale held its head high above the upland counties, so now it shares, to some extent, the woes that have befallen the once proud grain lands of the sister kingdom. It may also be noted that there is a good deal of clay hereabouts, as the cyclist will find out should he find the elements in an unkindly mood; and the significance of this will, of course, not be lost on those who know or care anything about these things.

But I must drop this agricultural strain, and pass on to matters that may, peradventure, be of more general interest. Country houses, to begin with, are thicker here than in any other part of North Wales; families of note have been more abundant, and social life richer and fuller than elsewhere. Dr. Johnson, when he paid his memorable visit to these parts with Mrs. Thrale, who, as a Salusbury, was a Clwydian of Clwydians, tells us that he had nowhere seen so many "elegant" country houses in one district. But then the Vale, though its inhabitants generally, as I have said, are purely Celtic, has, as regards its

landocracy, a singular and interesting history. For the Anglo-Norman colonies planted here in the days of Edward I. around the two great castles of Ruthin and Denbigh have in this respect influenced its whole life and in some measure that of all North Wales. In Merioneth or Carnarvon, putting aside quite recent purchasers, an English name upon the land-roll is almost always a mere accident of marriage. The sheriff lists alone would be sufficient evidence of this to inquirers who were fortified by no local knowledge. But the Vale of Clwyd, from end to end, and from Norman times, has been full, nay, has been almost dominated by families as Welsh as any Joneses or Pryces, but bearing English names. Ashpools, Dryhursts, Salusburys, Myddletons, Heatons, Chambres, Thelwalls, Dolbens, Peakes, and Cloughs are but a few notable examples of a much longer list. The majority have died out in the last century or so in the male line, it is true; but this is a mere detail, and in no way destroys the interest of a bit of social history that has no exact parallel in Britain. For Western Pembroke was a total clearance of the Celtic race. The English settlements in Ireland were mostly clearances, and are comparatively modern; but these Denbigh families spread gradually out of the walled towns, where for some generations they lived as privileged traders, colonies of Englishmen, speaking English, living under English laws, and protected by the great castles and the Crown. The privileges of the towns, however, after a time ceased to be racial, and long before the Cromwellian settlements in Ireland and the Jacobean clearances of Ulster and other parts, the Anglo-Normans of the Vale of Clwyd had intermarried with Wynnes and Vaughans and Lloyds, and become as Welsh as a modern nonconformist would probably allow a Welsh squire could ever be. This bit of history writes itself large enough upon the map of Denbigh. Plas Towerbridge, Plas y Ward, Plas Green, Plas Bennett, Plas Heaton, Plas Chambres, Plas Clough, catch the eye at once. Amid the Celtic nomenclature of the country they sound quite as strange to-day, perhaps, as they

ever did. They are the equivalents, in fact, of the castles and granges tacked on to homely Saxon names that one is familiar with in Ireland ; but then these Welsh stocks are mostly three to four hundred years older, and one takes off one's hat to their memories, or still more so to those that are yet extant and have sufficient vitality to be still in evidence.

But by no means did all these colonial families call their manors after their own names. For here we are passing Bachymbyd, the property of the most famous clan of all of them, the Salusburys of Rûg, and even yet in the possession of the Bagots, their descendants. And three mighty chestnut-trees, that a hundred years ago caused old Pennant to pull his horse up on its haunches in admiration of their giant stature, still flourish by the roadside. The thin streams of the Clywedog go chattering under a stone bridge to meet the Clwyd, which gurgles along between high red banks and tangled screens of leaves, twisting and turning through the flat lowland with just life enough to save its character as a Welsh stream, and that is all. We see little of it, however, on our road to Denbigh, for this clings to the western side of the vale—a pleasant enough route to travel, and as good a one too as a cyclist need wish to ride upon. There is a wide enough choice of roads in the Vale of Clwyd, for it is threaded in every direction by byways that in dry weather are quite tolerable and well worth investigating, since they carry one through so many pleasant scenes, not only in Dyffryn Clwyd, but up towards Llandegla and the hills of Yale. In a wet season, however, it will be well to remark a poisonous mixture of clay and limestone detracts greatly from the joy, and even from the safety of one's progress.

The soil, too, of much of the Vale possesses the rosy hues of South Devon, and the mud has adhesive qualities to clothes and vehicles that it would be hard to match. The hedges, moreover, are lush, and the hedge-trimmer here is a very demon among his kind, and has a passion for distributing his thorns with impartiality over the face of every road, such as I have

nowhere else seen even among hedge-trimmers. This superfluous outrage on the unoffending traveller will no doubt in course of time be, under compulsion, a thing of the past. The evil is so monstrous, and the remedy so simple, one may, I think, safely anticipate its settlement and dismiss the subject. But it is in autumn that the thorn fiend is here at his worst. At any rate, upon this main high road, in summer, we need not worry about him over much as we press on towards Denbigh.

It is no wonder that rival races fought and struggled with such eagerness for this fair tract of country. The Romans were here of course with an important station on the road to Conway. The village of Bodfari clinging to the foot of Moel y Gaer yonder recalls their General Varus, while Bwlch Agricola, at another point, suggests, in similar fashion, that misty period. In the long wars between the Welsh and Saxons, the latter not only got in here, for that they often did, but at one noted period in the ninth century they looked more like remaining permanently than upon any other occasion in pre-Norman Welsh history. But of this anon. And yet the greater part of even this rich country was forest, Sir John Wynne of Gwydir tells us, at the opening of the Tudor period, though the very wars which had swept backwards and forwards over it for so many hundred years, may have partly accounted for the grip in which the wilderness seemed at that time to hold so much of it.

The Vale has certainly made up for any time it may have lost in Glyndwr's desolation and the Wars of the Roses, and being now so full of human interest, it would be strange indeed if ghosts and legends and old wives' tales had not found the soil congenial. Even so hard-headed a worthy and soldier as old William Salusbury of this very Bachymlyd cannot lie quiet in his grave, but spurs a big white horse, 'tis said, up and down the country in mad career in the dark hours of the night. There is another house almost within sight, where the wraith of an old gentleman has been quite lately so uneasy and aggressive,

that when it came into the market (the house, I mean) a short while since, and was proposed as a suitable tenement for a certain institution, the authorities put their foot down and positively refused to submit the prospective inmates to such terrors as were there said to be abroad. Nor must I pass by another old manor house, standing away over on the other side of the Vale beneath the Clwydian Hills. Not for the reason that I have been myself much concerned with it, or think very highly of its ghost, seeing how often I have courted it in vain; but because the story out of which the ghost arises is a curious one, and worth recalling. Here again, I shall call no names. People sometimes boast of their ghosts, and sometimes do quite the other thing. They are undeniable luxuries, on a fine, old unencumbered property, but when it comes to finding purchasers or tenants, it is quite another affair, as, indeed, we have shown upon this very page. Suffice it therefore, to remark that Plas D—— is a respectably ancient house, with much oak panelling, and quite worthy of a bolder sprite than this one.

Now the squire, who lived here about the time of George the Second, was of an exceeding nervous disposition, and had some very valuable silver, besides his ordinary plate. So, in his old age, when he had ceased to ride around his farm, he had a false bottom made to the arm-chair in which he spent most of his time, and deposited therein the more precious of his treasures, and in brief, sat upon them all day with much deliberation and contentment of mind. It so happened, however, that one of his own people, labourer or servant, who had been much about his house, and knew of his valuables, though not of his recently developed plan for safe guarding them, was in London, working as a carpenter. But he fell, in time, into bad habits, and became connected with a gang of professional house-breakers, who extended their operations, when it seemed worth their while, to the furthest limits of the land. The Welsh carpenter, remembering the presence of certain valuables at Plas D——, and conceiving the house, from its isolated position and lack of

protection, would be an easy one to raid, proposed the adventure to his confederates, who fell in with the scheme. It was a Sunday evening in summer that the robbers selected for their job, when the men about the place might be expected to be away, or in church. In this calculation they were correct, and tying their horses in the stable-yard, they found no one within, but some of the women in the kitchen, and the old squire seated on his chair in the dining-room. The former they soon terrified into silence with their pistols, the latter, however, resisted so strenuously, that they tied him down to his seat on top of his most valuable property in fact, if they had only known it, and then proceeded to search the house. No doubt, they were disappointed in the value of the plunder they had come all that distance for. Still, they made the best of what seemed a bad bargain, filled their saddle bags, and were none too soon in clearing out of the front gate on to the road. For a small child had escaped notice, and had rushed in terror to the village a mile off and roused the congregation, for the Welsh were then all good Tories and churchgoers. The villagers came pouring along in great excitement just as the robbers turned into the Chester and London road, which then went through the pass of Bwlch pen barras, between Moels Fenlli and Famman. From any pursuit on foot, they were of course safe, but it so happened that three or four young bloods of the neighbourhood, who owned good horses, had made haste upon the first alarm to get them ready for the road, and were not far behind the villagers. Then ensued a great race for London. The robbers had a fair start, and were well mounted, as such men had need to be. Their pursuers, however, stuck to them with such extraordinary tenacity, that although they could not actually overtake them, they arrived in London so close upon their heels, and upon a scent so burning hot, that eventually they tracked them to their lairs, and succeeded in getting all three arrested. The robbers were consequently sent back to Denbigh, where, at the next assizes, they were condemned to



Tied him down and proceeded to search the House.

be hanged, the sentence being carried out with the promptitude characteristic of the times. And it is the ghost of the faithless carpenter, who so shamefully betrayed his old master, that is said to flit uneasily through the wainscoted rooms when all is quiet amid the darkness of the night.

A very popular seat of superstition in the Vale of Clwyd, are the immense stones that have wandered down, in the Glacial age, from the craggy heights of far-off Snowdon, as is supposed, and lie here and there, like aliens and strangers as they are, upon the fields and by the roadsides. Each one of these is firmly believed to contain an imprisoned spirit, and any violent usage of these "meini hirion" was always regarded as a sacrilege. Neither the stones nor the superstition are of course peculiar to the Vale of Clwyd. For when Lake Vyrnwy was being created, ten years ago, amid the Berwyn mountains, and a celebrated local stone in the course of the work had to be blown up with dynamite, the natives of Llanwddyn—the submerged village—were aghast, and stood afar off shuddering at the sacrilegious act, fully expecting the spirit thus rudely robbed of its long home, to go roaring down the valley, seeking whom it might devour. Nothing came of it, but for a long time afterwards in the tumbling pool where Carreg Yspryd—"the Stone of the Spirit"—had stood, mysterious groans were heard at nightfall, and a sound as of the dragging of heavy chains.

But here is the fine old church of Llanrhaiadr, with its tidy and substantial almshouses standing behind it, and its famous holy well in the wooded glen above, and its green and crowded graveyard spreading down to meet the road. We must stop here for a moment, not so much to inspect a Jesse window, said to have been buried in the ground for safety during the Puritan period; nor to look at the tombs of Dolbens, whence came his Grace of York and less-known bishops; nor yet to admire the interior of the old church, though it is well worth admiring—but to recall a pretty story which a tombstone lying flat and wrinkled upon the turf outside the east window tells us.

There are five of them in fact, all marking the graves of soldiers who fell in the famous siege of Denbigh. But beneath this particular stone lies the dust of one of the Wynnes, a grandson of the great house of Gwydir, near Llanrwst, and a captain in a royal regiment of foot. This young man was wounded in a skirmish with the Parliamentary troops who were besieging Denbigh in 1645, at a spot upon the Clwyd still called the Captain's Bridge, and was carried back within the town to die. As his father's house was at Astrad in the parish of Llanrhaiadr, it was desired that he should be buried here, three miles from Denbigh, and of course beyond the Roundhead lines. Of the *pourparlers* we know nothing. But we do know that hostilities temporarily ceased, and the funeral *cortège* wound its way along the road as far as the bridge over the Ystryd; that the soldiers who accompanied the bier there halted, and firing three volleys over it, forthwith delivered the body to a company of the enemy who were drawn up to receive it. These latter then bore the coffin reverently to Llanrhaiadr churchyard, and with the same honours as had been paid the dead captain upon the bridge by his own people, they lowered him into the grave above which we are now standing.

Denbigh is one of the best country towns in North Wales; there is not a doubt about that. For Welshpool is practically an English town, and there is certainly no other where you would see so many fair women and brave men, well appointed and well attired, and suggestive of a neighbourhood that was sociable and enjoyed itself and was populous enough to do so. There is surely some safety too in numbers in country life. When a neighbourhood, in a social sense, is very scant, and the well-to-do of its inhabitants should be all in all to each other, they are too often less than nothing, and cherish sore feuds, which is as lamentable as dull. In the Tudor and Stuart periods, the Welsh squires also cherished feuds, as we shall see before we have done. But if these were deadly, they at any rate were anything but dull.

In Denbigh, too, you will see farmers of a type you would

look for rather in Shrewsbury or Worcester or Hereford, though they will be Welsh almost to a man, and in spite of a covert coat, breeches and gaiters, and very likely a good nag under them, will be almost as certainly speaking the vernacular. Here, too, you might see a red coat on winter mornings, for the Vale is the only part of North Wales proper, where "the horn of the hunter (other than of the thistle whipper) is heard on the hill." Here too, you might look for a troop of yeomanry to muster at the season appointed for those heated functions, and would, I believe, not look in vain; and furthermore, from the general appearance of the main street, you might expect the man who cuts your hair to take an interest in the "Two thousand" or the last Australian match, and not talk chapel shop in Welsh to a sympathetic customer awaiting his turn. But then, there is no saying as to this; for in spite of the wide-awake look of a cheery country town in a good part of England, that Denbigh wears, there is underneath all this the heart and pulse of an abounding Welsh life.

Denbigh, as a matter of fact, has been one of the chief sources of Welsh political and agrarian movements. For here still lives a once redoubtable politician[1] the "Grand old man" of Wales, the owner of the *Baner*, the erst anathematiser of landlords, parsons, and everything ecclesiastical, in language that made your blood curdle and your flesh creep. The *Baner* roused the vernacular press, whose journals in the late eighties said such terrible things of all Welsh conservatives, and interpreted Welsh history after a fashion so wholly apocryphal, that it is considered, even by their opponents, almost ungenerous to rake up the astounding paragraphs that found their way into cottage and farmhouse. I should like to quote some of those that lie before me, translated into English, if I had space, because it would hurt no one now, and would perhaps amuse. Sufficient to say, that the Irish outrage-monger was held up to admiration, and strong incitements to the same midnight methods were pressed upon the Welsh peasantry, whose

[1] Since these pages went to press the veteran politician has passed away.

common sense and self respect, however, were happily proof against them.

The tithe agitation, as most of us remember, was not conducted wholly without violence, and was successful in so far as the tenant now pays his tithe to his landlord, instead of the old clumsy method of leaving the poor parson to collect the invidious tax.

It may be illogical that the Welsh farmer pays cheerfully to the landlord to be handed over to the parson the exact amount that he paid before. But it is very fortunate he sees it in that light, and nobody, I am sure, has a right to complain—most certainly not the poor cleric. That any other system could have been followed in modern times, always seems to me incredible. All's well that ends well ; not by any means that the Church Establishment question is ended in Wales. Indeed, I doubt if the Welsh peasantry care a button about any other political matter, and if by any chance it were to be settled, I really do not know what they would do. For unless a land agitation could be got up which would touch their pockets, and be yet in harmony with their peaceful inclinations, which the last attempt certainly was not, politics, I do believe, would die out in Wales of inanition. The Welshman of the class who speak the native tongue, is an industrious and law-abiding person and an excellent citizen, except in so far that I do not think he cares a little bit about national affairs, his leisure time and interest being so engrossed with the concerns that directly or indirectly bear upon his chapel. But he had a little flutter in the tithe agitation, and there was some tarring and feathering of bailiffs, both in Denbigh and Merioneth, and some movement of troops. The parsons complained most bitterly of landlords at that time, and, I fancy, with some justice, declaring that many of them not only did not back up their clergy in this their hour of need, but openly stated that they feared to, lest if pressed the revolt against tithe should lead to a revolt against rent. That this was true of some I know, and comment on

such an attitude would be superfluous, for there is nothing upon earth that could be said for it. England had certainly in the past done her very utmost and her very best to make the Welsh Church a farce, but the Welsh landlords of former days had done precious little to resist this insanity of treatment, and now the Church of Wales was making an effort, according to its opportunities, to recover itself, and the English Government was no longer offering any obstacle.

The vernacular press became at that time, and still remains, a great power in Wales, if indeed it is not somewhat audacious to use the word vernacular in relation to the ancient tongue of Britain. Its weight, too, is wholly or almost wholly, thrown upon one side, the Church and Conservative party being most scantily represented in the native tongue, and this is not only a serious drawback to their interests, but a difficult one to overcome, as newspapers, I take it, cannot flourish unless at the same time they pay. But the vernacular press, under the leadership of the Denbigh oracle, though it succeeded in creating a great strike against tithe, failed utterly in its uncalled-for endeavour to stir up a land war and make bad blood between landlords and tenants. The measure of its success in this lamentable effort may be best appreciated by the amount of money subscribed to its war chest in three years, by the class whose cupidity was immediately appealed to—namely, sixty pounds and a few odd shillings. Most of us would say this speaks well for the honesty of the Welsh farmers. But their would-be leaders did not think so, and were only less vituperative towards the irresponsive readers than they were towards that "Trinity of robbers—the landlords, agents and parsons." But the attitude of the Welsh tenantry in the tithe war, when they considered, rightly or wrongly, that they had justice on their side, was vigorous enough. They could afford to bear with equanimity the taunts of the disappointed journalists to the effect that they were traitors and servile flatterers, and many other pleasant things, when they refused to

combine against their landords. It was a time though, of course, for the local busybody and the local orator to seize his opportunity, and I may perhaps be allowed to recall a little adventure that came under my own notice, not because it was of any importance, but merely because it gave rise to much mirth and good-humoured raillery in the locality, nor perhaps was it wholly without significance.

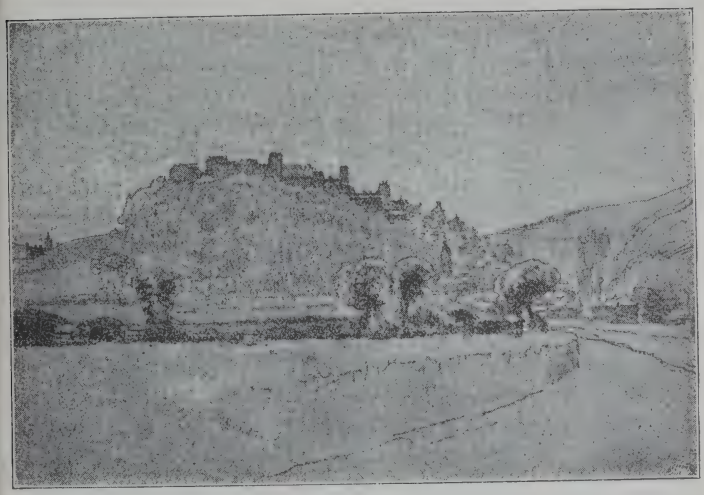
It was the year 1887, and the scene of the adventure was a little port upon the Western coast. The season, that sunny one between the hay and grain harvest, when even that most inveterate of stay-at-homes, the farmer, is accustomed to take a little jaunt. It was said, though perhaps with malice, that the gentleman who owned the sloop and contracted for the trip, being an ardent politician, was the instigator of the enterprise. However that may be, a dozen land-leaguers or potential land-leaguers, from the surrounding mountains sailed one fine morning over the bright blue sea for the Emerald Isle. They were a deputation, or posed as one, for the purpose of collecting information on the subject of agrarian intrigue from those past-masters of it that flourished in the opposite county of Waterford, as in most other parts of the distressful country. But the sea was not bright blue or anything like it when these heroic adventurers—for, from a nautical point of view, it was a heroic trip for such a set of utter landlubbers—after a brief absence, came beating painfully and slowly homeward their tempestuous way. That they were sadder and much sicker men than when they started out, was patent to every eye ; and I am afraid at this distance of time I could not undertake to say how long their frail bark took to accomplish the voyage. As to the result of the mission, there was something much more than a lack of enthusiasm among the delegates. They were simple farmers, and it soon leaked out that they liked neither the men nor the methods that they had seen. Whether misplaced or not, however, there was much mirth awakened in the district at the adventure, which was a good thing, as Welsh life

is a trifle sombre: it needs a little more laughter. Welshmen, as a matter of fact, do not like Irishmen, and probably the compliment is returned. No Irish agitator has ever influenced or could ever influence Welshmen. It is not so much the ignorance of Welsh history and the failure to grasp the situation in Wales which comes out in almost every speech yet delivered by Irish politicians, but no man will ever deeply stir the Welsh people who cannot speak their language.

Denbigh, however, is a great deal more than a pleasant country town. For when you have climbed up its long steep street to the market-place, there is yet another pull, if you would see its full beauties, to the old castle that crowns the summit of all. And in reaching this you pass beneath a massive gateway, that marks the entrance to the old Norman town, now consisting of but a few ancient cottages and scattered buildings of a later date. On the wide Castle green stands the shell of the long-abandoned parish church. On the highest point of all, nearly 500 feet above the Vale below, rise the stately ruins of the great Norman fortress, with the battered effigy above its gateway of its founder and grantee, Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln.

There had been a castle here, long before these Norman towers were raised. But the Edwardian Conquest was Denbigh's great epoch—when the King lay for three years, more or less, at Rhuddlan, within sight yonder, carving out counties and lordships, and raising those tremendous castles, against which all future efforts of the Welsh broke in vain. The whole country between Chester and Conway had been continually changing from Welsh to Norman hands. But now Flint and Carnarvon, upon the east and west, were made counties, and the Vale of Clwyd, divided between the Lacys and the Greys, into two great lordships, dominated by Denbigh and Ruthin respectively. The Greys remained for two centuries; but the Lacy's reign was short. The only son of the first Lord fell down a well, now marked by the Goblin tower, and, in due

course, there succeeded to his honour, that celebrated Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, who spent his life, and ultimately lost it, in opposing the Gavestons and Despensers, and other favourites of the second Edward, dying, as we know, in the odour of sanctity and patriotism. His old enemies, the Despensers, followed him at Denbigh. Then came the mighty Mortimers, then the Montacutes, and in Glyndwr's wars, Henry Percy was



Denbigh.

here, trying to stem the tide of insurrection. In the Wars of the Roses, faction raged through the Vale of Clwyd. Jasper Tudor, Henry of Richmond, and the Earl of Pembroke were all here, fighting up and down it. An old Welsh saying has come down, which means in English, "In Harlech and Denbigh, every door flaming, the Vale of Conway reduced to embers, in the year of our Lord 1468." So great was the desolation, says Sir John Wynne of Gwydir, that those who

had mortgaged their lands, did not think them worth releasing. The whole country was "burnt to cold coals."

The dark and bloody days of Wales may be said to end with the advent of the Tudors. Henry VII., it is true, did not do much for them, and thereby gave no little offence to his expectant countrymen; but his burly son did everything. Wales was then carefully surveyed, the lordships and their personal irresponsible governments swept away, and merged into counties, and the Principality, for the first time, sent up members to Parliament. Henry the Eighth's surveyor speaks thus of Denbigh—"The said castle is built high upon a rock of stone, very stately and beautifully, in a very sweet air." Some of the old towers, though greatly rent, and a considerable part of the walls and bastions remain. The well down which Henry de Lacy's only son pitched headlong to his doom is still there; while underneath the circular and octagonal Norman workmanship evidence of the square towers that marked the old Welsh architecture is plainly traceable. The ruins have been happily secured this long time against further decay, and the courtyard pleasantly laid out in tennis-lawns and bowling-greens.

Seldom, surely, do either youth or age sport upon a spot so strikingly significant and so wholly beautiful as this summit of the rock of Caledfryn, "the craggy hill in Rhos." Beneath us the greater part of Dyffryn Clwyd, east, north, south, and west, lies spread like a glowing map in rich and chequered colouring. It might indeed be a bit of Kent or Sussex, before superior villadom had gone out there to spoil the landscape with patches of red brick, but for the fact that it is threaded by the crystal streams of Wales and bounded upon three sides by her glorious hills. It is small wonder that amid a land elsewhere so stern both Saxon and the Norman made such desperate efforts to gain a lodgment here, and the Welsh so desperately strove to hold it. Brought face to face with this great sweep of Nature's canvas, when the sun is shining upon the roofs of church and

manor-house and homestead and lighting up a hundred memories of the vale and stirring up a hundred thoughts, one feels how few of these one can hope to express, and can only pray that we may be rightly guided in so invidious a selection. There, at any rate, gleaming with its white walls among the meadows a mile or so beyond the town, is the old parish church, for the dismantled building on the castle green, though venerable enough Heaven knows, seeing that masses were said there for Henry Hotspur and de Lacy, held, like Ruthin, no proper parochial rank. Whitchurch however is a very different affair from the little churchlet at Llanrhydd, being of generous proportions and a fine specimen of fifteenth-century early decorated style with a stately tower. Spread around it and covering much ground is a thick forest of dilapidated, as well as more recent tombstones, where the dust of the old Anglo-Norman colony lies intermingled with that of its Welsh connections and dependants—Myddletons, Salusburys, Dryhursts, Cloughs, Peakes, Rosindales, and a host of others.

Within the church a great alabaster altar monument of the Elizabethan period commemorates Sir John Salusbury of Lleweni, or Syr John y Bodiau (of the thumbs). Upon this recline the effigies of the stalwart knight and his wife, the former in full armour. On one side are their eight sons, also for the most part fully equipped ; on the other, four daughters, two of them in swaddling clothes. Sir John was celebrated for his two thumbs upon each hand, and for Herculean strength. A popular tradition credits him with having killed a mythical and much dreaded beast that had its lair in the cliffs below the castle, and having also slain a great white lioness with his naked fist in the Tower of London, thus earning for his estate the name of Lleweni, Llew being the Welsh for the king of beasts. He also overthrew in a wrestling match a famous giant, Edward Shon David, whose walking-stick was the axletree of a cart with a crowbar driven through it. Syr John, too, was accustomed to show off his strength, when he had no worthier object for it,

by tearing up forest trees by the roots. Altogether an unpleasant gentleman to fall out with.

But the fame of the Salusburys rests on a sounder basis than these apocryphal performances. They were originally de Saltzburgs, of a noble house in Bavaria, who came over with William of Normandy, and found their way into Wales long before the Edwardian conquest. A Salusbury was one of the first Governors of Denbigh, holding it for Henry II. during his temporary conquest. A Salusbury was the very last of its war-governors, William of that name, as we shall see, defending the castle for Charles I. with immense tenacity. They were as fortunate in love as famous in war, a heavy proportion of Welsh heiresses falling to their share. The most famous mother of Salusburys, however, by far was that Catherine of Beraine, of whom no Englishman probably ever heard, but who is quite the most illustrious lady in reasonably modern Welsh history.

When Henry VII., prior to his elevation to the throne of England, was residing in Brittany, he formed a connection with a Breton lady named Velville, from which sprang a son, who so far found favour in his father's eyes that he was ultimately brought over to this country and made Constable of Beaumaris, with suitable endowments and the title of Sir Rowland Velville, or Bryttain. This young man still further secured himself by marrying into a branch of the Penrhyn family, seated at Newydd on the Menai Straits. Of this marriage there was but one daughter, Jane Velville, who became an orphan and a very wealthy one. Queen Elizabeth was her cousin, for they had the same grandfather, and she was also her guardian. And she did not like it, for Jane was young and handsome, and the Virgin Queen at that time was also young, and thought herself, at any rate, handsome. For every reason it was desirable she should be back in her native principality and settled in a home of her own. So Elizabeth found means to make it understood throughout Wales that tenders for the hand of the royal-

descended and well-endowed heiress would be received and decided upon their merits. One can well imagine there was some stir among the Cambrian squires. The applicant who ultimately found favour was Tudor ap Robert Vychan, of Beraine. Of this union too, strange to say, there was only one child, and that a daughter, who came to be known as Catherine of Beraine, the subject of this parenthesis.

She was even richer than the others, and enjoyed the reputation of great brains and force of character. What among the vulgar, however, has chiefly made her famous is the fact, not only of her having had four husbands, all celebrities, but also of the humours which surround their overtures. For the first was a Salusbury of Lleweni, by whom she became the mother of the lion-killing and tree-uprooting "Syr John," and the grandmother of the goodly flock we saw upon his tomb at Whitchurch. But in no long time death granted to this notable lady what we can only assume she regarded as a happy release, seeing the fashion in which she outraged what we should now at any rate regard as the most elementary proprieties. Now, it seems to have been the right thing in those days for a widow, when following her husband's body to the grave, to have been conducted thither by one or other of her lamented consort's friends. The right of offering consolation and drying the lady's tears on this solemn occasion fell to Sir Richard Clough, a sober widower of much wealth and great renown. Sir Richard dried them with a vengeance; for before they reached the church, he had offered himself as his deceased friend's successor, and had been actually accepted. Whether Maurice Wynn, of Gwydir, one of the foremost gentlemen in Wales, and also a mourner, was hurried by any suspicion of what might be going on into action almost as precipitate, or whether with a little more sense of decency than his rival, he had already laid his plans for the return journey, history does not say. But it fell to his lot to escort the sorrowing widow home again, and great was his consternation, and deep his chagrin when

he discovered that, prompt and timely though it was, his offer came too late. He did, however, the best thing that under the circumstances was possible; and the lady rose to the occasion and promised him most solemnly the reversion of her hand should she have to perform the same sad ceremony over Sir Richard as she had just completed over her first husband. Maurice Wynn was something of a philosopher no doubt, and had already buried two wives at Gwydir, and, possessing his soul in patience, he reaped in due time his just reward, and won his third. For Sir Richard, of whom more anon, died at forty; and the gracious Catherine being once more free, proved true to her troth, and went to preside over one of the stateliest households and fairest estates in Wales. This, however, is by no means the end of the story, for she buried Maurice Wynn also, and not only that, but made a fourth venture with Edward Thelwall, of Plas-y-Ward. Never surely was there such a record made by a woman of quality. Herself of royal descent and great possessions, and by all accounts of singular mental attraction, if not surpassing beauty, she married successively into four of the most powerful houses of North Wales.

Her descendants are so numerous that almost every family of position, and many no doubt of no longer any at all, in North Wales boast or could boast descent from her, and she shares with the fertile island of Anglesea the sobriquet of Mam Cymru, or Mother of Wales. One of her descendants, at any rate, bore a name much more familiar to English ears than that of the illustrious Catherine herself, and this was Mrs. Thrale. Those who know their Johnson will remember how she brought the Doctor down to see the estate of Bachegraig, which had fallen to her through the Cloughs. The Doctor's mild adventures among the Denbigh squires, and his, with a few notable exceptions, affable behaviour as he rolled about their parlours, is of course a matter of history, which every one should look up who is setting his face towards the Vale of Clwyd.

We can get a glimpse from the castle here of what is left of

that same house of Bachegraig, once the wonder of the Vale, tucked away under the Clwydian range, below Tremeirchion. It was built by Sir Richard Clough; and Sir Richard is one of the greatest of Denbighshire worthies, and flourished in the reigns of Bloody Mary and Elizabeth. He began life as a poor boy, and died at forty so wealthy that "as rich as a Clough" passed into a Welsh proverb. He became a partner or factor of the celebrated Sir Thomas Gresham, was a sort of commercial ambassador for England in the Low Countries, and being a great builder in his native district, left the mark of his Flemish taste on many old buildings in and around Denbigh. His first house, Plas Clough, which we can see among the trees near the St. Asaph road, and is still inhabited, has the terraced gables of the Low Countries, and the date of its erection above the door.

But it is of a far more ambitious effort at Bachegraig, of which only one side of what was once a square is left, that I would speak, for this was the wonder of the age. Pennant in the last century saw the house still in its completeness, and says it rose into six wonderful stories, forming the figure of a pyramid, and was covered with much painted glass and quaint devices. The country people held firmly to the belief that Satan had supplied the materials every night for the next day's work, the clay for the bricks being dug out of the bottomless pit, and baked in infernal fires. Sir Richard, after its completion, was supposed to retire every night to a windowless room near the roof, for the purpose of conferring with the Evil One. This, was altogether too much for his wife's curiosity, which eventually overcame her discretion, for at length, unable to any longer contain herself, she stole upstairs upon tiptoe to the mysterious chamber, and there, peeping through the keyhole, sure enough she espied the nameless one hobnobbing in most friendly fashion with her husband. But his Satanic Majesty's senses were far too acute for even the subtle Catherine's tactics, and, seizing Sir Richard in his arms, he burst with a wild yell through the brick wall, shattering the masonry in every direction. All

this is to be accounted for by the fact that Sir Richard was a zealous astronomer, and had an observatory on the roof. He died at Hamburg, but his heart and his hand lie buried here at Whitchurch in a silver urn. One side of Bachegraig's original square still makes a spacious rambling farmhouse. Through the meadows beneath the Clwyd murmurs between its high and bushy banks, and from the hill above looks down the large mansion of Brynbella, which Mrs. Thrale built when she married Piozzi. The Vale, till quite recently, was full of Cloughs, descended from a son of Sir Richard's by a former connection, the poet Arthur Hugh being a member of the clan. At this date but one of the name, I think, is left here, though plenty of their blood.

CHAPTER VIII

DENBIGH—RHUDDLAN

Even the light summer winds play freshly among these high perched ruins of what must have once been one of the largest castles in Wales. So much so that one is glad to descend from the gusty walls and turrets to the terraced bastions below, and from the more sheltered vantage point of a garden seat, to look out westward, where the country rolls upward in broken and picturesque undulations to the great Hiraethog table land.

Within a stone's throw—within the castle walls, in fact, and upon ground where a tennis court is now laid out—stood the cottage in which H. M. Stanley, the great explorer, was born. Far below us, in the meadows, an old white house of small dimensions still commemorates the birth, within its thick stone walls, of the famous Sir Hugh Myddleton, already told of. Beyond, upon the sloping hills, blow the woodlands of Gwaenynog, formerly one of the chief seats of the Myddleton family, where Samuel Johnson used to spend so many of his days, and where still stands an inscribed monument to his memory. A little further on again, is the valley where one of the most famous of Welsh poets, and so recent a celebrity that he only died in 1810—"Twm or Nant" or Tom of the Dingle—was born and lived.

I do not think it is of much profit expatiating on the life, actions, or merits of a Welsh bard to English readers. The details, as a rule, sound bald and trumpery. The language in which they wrote puts them outside the comprehension of the most sympathetically inclined alien. They do not often bear translation. Their merits have to be taken absolutely on trust. It is almost impossible for the Saxon to realise the point of view from which they are judged, nor is there any equivalent in England to the part that the Welsh bard has played in Welsh life. A hundred Robert Burns playing on smaller stages, but some few standing out with a national as against a provincial reputation, and every one of them a host of imitators, piping down to the veriest doggerel of illiterate peasants. Who shall say, however, that this is not better than loafing at street corners and putting half-crowns on somebody else's performances at a football match? One touches the subject of Welsh poetry with dread and awe, but I believe one may fairly say that the lower ranks of Welsh versifiers are, to a very small extent, animated by poetic fervour, in the ordinary sense of the word. The scanning and alliteration and trick of words comprises both the fascination and the triumph. They are something like fourth form boys making Latin verses with a gradus, only with fervour and not under compulsion, or the subscribers to a penny weekly getting so many words out of so many letters for a guinea prize.

But there are, of course, many humble as well as many distinguished exceptions in all times, and Twm or Nant is one of the latter, perhaps the last. Welsh bards were of all classes: squires, parsons, ministers and peasants. Tom was a peasant. His life is familiar enough, and of abiding interest to the Welsh. But it would not, I think, interest my readers. He learnt to write and read at an abnormal age, under the usual harrowing conditions. The village shop was burned down, and he acquired some singed and scattered leaves of paper. His ink was the juice of elderberries, his tutor the village smith. He

grew up to haul wood, and, unlike most poets, was a past master of his trade, as well as, in truth, something of a genius. He wrote "interludes" and acted them in the neighbouring towns and villages, a frequent proceeding in those days. His fortunes were varied—in truth he was a little inclined to be gay—though a Benedick and a family man. He drifted at one time to a toll-gate in South Wales, where, as its custodian, he saw, like a true poet, phantom coaches, ghostly funerals, corpse candles, and every eyrie thing that glides by night, go through his fastened barrier. He was famous, moreover, for feats of strength of so marvellous a kind, that if our friend "Syr John Salusbury"—near whom, by the way, he lies at Whitchurch—had been a contemporary, there would have been great diversion in Denbigh, and Syr John would not have been so often reduced to tearing up forest trees by the roots for want of an antagonist. Twm, however, as a satirist of men, manners and morals, and particularly of the higher clergy who, certainly in those days, laid themselves woefully open to it, has made for himself immortal fame. Borrow says he was greater as a man than a poet. We have no space for his rustic feats of skill, courage, and endurance, while specimens of his verse would, I fear, be lamentably out of place. So we will take off our hat to his memory, and proceed to say something of a much more highly placed, but less worthy individual, who raised a great commotion in the Vale of Clwyd two hundred years before Twm or Nant carted wood and played interludes up and down it.

Long before the reign of Elizabeth, Denbigh Castle and its manor had reverted to the Crown, and that acquisitive monarch sold it to her favourite Dudley, Earl of Leicester. It is doubtful, however, if that brilliant personage paid even the first instalment of the purchase-money. At any rate, upon his death, the Queen reannexed it on the plea of his indebtedness to her. This, however, is of no consequence: but Leicester's reign at Denbigh was of very much to the people of that country, as he

gave them no rest from his high-handed tyrannies and exactions. He demanded heavy fines from one and all, quadrupled the rents, enclosed public commons, encroached on private estates, and raised a storm in the neighbourhood that was remembered for generations. Two of the young Salusbury's of Lleweni, of whose local consequence the reader, I am sure, has now a just idea, headed a band and pulled down his illegal fences. He sent them both to Shrewsbury and had them hung —an audacious outrage that may well have shaken the Vale of Clwyd to its outermost limits.

It was not only the Vale, however, that Leicester laid his heavy hand on, but he was also Ranger of the Royal forest of Snowdon, and by outrageous pretensions that the forest's bounds extended over Merioneth and Anglesey, he stirred to red-heat the squires and freeholders of those two counties. As an instance of his vexatious claims over Anglesey, he based them on the case of a stag which had been roused among the Snowdon woods swimming the Menai before the hounds and dying at Bodorgan. He next employed surveyors to declare that the freeholders had encroached on the lands of the Crown. Let there be a commission, then, cried out the country, and juries be empanelled. So a commission there was, but the juries, one after the other, condemned Leicester's claims. His Lordship then procured a jury of his own, who actually appeared in court at Beaumaris in the Earl's own livery with the ragged staves upon their sleeves.

This was too much, and Sir Richard Bulkely, of Baron Hill, in Anglesey, rose as champion of the oppressed provincials, and laid before the Queen a petition entitled "*Griefs of her Majesty's loyal Welsh subjects*," which may still be read. Leicester, as a counter move, brought charges of treason against Sir Richard: but the council would not even hear them. He then went to the Queen herself, but Elizabeth was getting rather sick of Leicester and his antics in Wales. "What," said she, "Sir Richard a traitor, never! We have brought him up

from a boy and have special trial of his fidelity. You shall *not* commit him. Before God and upon the Holy Evangelists," stormed her majesty, "you shall *not* commit him; we have brought him up from a boy." And swearing a great oath, the indignant Queen flew across the room and kissed the bible as an evidence of her resolution.

Dudley, foiled in this quarter, then sent a pensioner of his to one Green of Plas-y-Green to challenge the formidable Knight of Anglesey to a duel, not, be it noted, with any intention of appearing as principal himself. But Sir Richard was equal to so contemptible a strategy. "Is this all the message you have?" said he to Mr. Green of Plas-y-Green, when he had finished; and upon that gentleman giving the Knight to understand that there was nothing further to add, Sir Richard up with his dagger "and brought the handle down with a right lusty crack on the top of poor Green's payte, telling him to take that back for an answer."

Things were now getting so strained between the great courtier and the Welsh Knight, that the latter never moved without four-and-twenty stout men, armed with swords, bucklers and daggers. He even took them to London with him, whereupon the Earl's faction hired boats and men to follow Sir Richard's flotilla upon the Thames, and try and drown him, and there seemed every prospect of the Welsh quarrel being fought out in a naval engagement between Westminster and Greenwich. But the squire of Baron Hill, even in London, was too many for his treacherous foes. Borrowing the Lord Mayor's largest barge, and furnishing it with "men, musketts, bulletts, drums and trumpets, he rowed along ye Thames, shot ye bridge and on down to Greenwich, where ye Queen kept her Court at that time." There, for some reason or other, probably defiance of Leicester, he indulged in a great noise of firing and drum-beating and trumpet blowing. It was perfectly scandalous, said Leicester, hurrying to the Queen's side. "Here is Sir Richard actually making war on your Majesty,

and to the great terror of your Court." "Not a bit of it," said in effect the level-headed Queen. "Fetch him in"; and she then and there made Sir Richard and Leicester, greatly to their mutual disgust, shake hands. Leicester, nevertheless, asked his Welsh enemy to dinner, who, chuckling in his sleeve, and having no doubt apparently of the Earl's hospitable intentions, accepted the invitation; but he took precious good care, he adds, "only to eat what the Earl eat and to drink what the Earl drank, remembering Sir Nicholas Throgmorton, who was said to have received a figg at his table."

Both Sir Richard, Denbigh, and the Forest of Snowdon were soon relieved from the Earl's oppressive hand by death. It should, however, be said that he did much to the castle in the way of restoration, and, as a more prominent memorial of his reign, has left a half-finished church just under the walls—a pretentious structure of great size, which, it is said, Leicester hoped to make the diocesan cathedral, to the extinction of St. Asaph. We may well believe that he would not only, had he lived, have carried this matter through, but, if the bishopric itself should have happened to fall vacant, he would have done his best, no doubt, to annex this to his other honours and emoluments.

But, after all, Denbigh's great record is in having been the last fortress in the country to hold out for the King in the Civil War. And I shall have bored my readers with Denbighshire genealogy to little purpose, if they do not recognise how eminently fitting it was that a Salusbury should be the hero of the defence, and a Myddelton of the attack; though, to be sure, the last is not the whole truth, for the Parliamentary command was soon taken over by the more celebrated General Mytton. Mytton too was sprung from Denbigh Anglo-Norman stock, the Muttons, but was now of Halston, in Shropshire—ancestor to that notorious Jack Mytton whose senseless follies within man's memory wrecked an ancient family, a great fortune, and a noble estate.



"The Royalist cavalry chased"

But the siege of Denbigh was a very famous business, and to do it justice would require six times the space that we can here afford. Contemporary poets applauded the tenacious valour of its defenders in glowing verse—

> "That vast dominion, t'which were once assigned
> Noe bounds, but Neptune's waves, is now confined
> Within thy walls. Brave fortress, what must be
> Well styled the palace of Dame Loyaltie."

Or again—

> "Hould out, brave Denbigh, that just fame
> That after times may historize thy name,
> When this thy glorious epithet shall bee,
> Denbigh that saved England's monarchie."

"There was not a barony in England," says an authority of the period, "that had more gentlemen holding therefrom," and they nearly all flocked to Denbigh when the war swept across the Marches and the hour of peril came. Sir William Salusbury of Rûg and Bachymbyd was formally commissioned as Governor by the King, old "Hosanau Gleision," or "Blue stockings," as his soldiers fondly called him from his fancy for that colour in his hose. The walls of Denbigh had never yet seriously felt the battering of artillery, and Salusbury had no light task in the strengthening, victualling, and arming the place for a sustained siege. He had ample time, however, for he was in possession before the Royalist defeats of Marston Moor and Naseby in 1644, and the siege did not seriously begin till the commencement of 1646. Sir Thomas Myddelton had demonstrated in force, however, long before that, Denbigh being regarded as the pivot of North Wales, and had summoned Salusbury to surrender, causing great indignation in the breast of that valiant gentleman. For the two were, of course, old friends, neighbours, and relatives; and their correspondence is still preserved, and is stamped with the pathos that distinguishes so much of this kind of civil war literature.

Not only the gentlemen of the neighbourhood, however, with their families, plate, and movable goods, had crowded into Denbigh, but Royalists of all sorts and descriptions from other parts and from the beaten armies. The King himself retreated there after seeing his troops defeated at Rowton Heath, near Chester, in September '45. He only stopped two days, but the tower that was fitted up for his reception still bears his unhappy name. A considerable battle took place in the meadows beneath the town between a force chiefly consisting of raw Welsh levies under Sir William Vychan, and Mytton's brigade, which was largely made up of Londoners. The Royalists were badly beaten, and their cavalry chased nearly to the Conway, the shepherds on the Hiraethog slopes fleeing in dismay from the strange roar of pursuing artillery, and the remote churchyard of Llangerniew, among others, opened wide its green bosom for some score or two of slaughtered officers and troopers. And indeed you may to-day see there six-pound shot that have been dug up and treasured by the natives of as sequestered and peaceful a spot as there is in the three kingdoms.

But the summer of 1646 was both a painful and a glorious one for Denbigh. There was plenty of food, but the defenders in the castle were sorely cramped for room. It was the driest season upon record, and there was both disease and scarcity of water upon that high arid rock. The Royal cause had become hopeless; nearly every strong post in the kingdom was in the hands of the Commonwealth; Chester and the Marcher castles too had fallen, and so had Ruthin. Charles had retired to the far North, and neither policy nor honour required further sacrifices. But the stout old Salusbury, after telling the King some home truths in very plain language as he passed through Denbigh, went on to show his loyalty was above personal considerations; for he swore a mighty oath not to give up the castle till his master commanded him; and his Cavaliers stuck to him bravely, skirmishing and fighting and suffering by his side from April till November. It was of no use Mytton

sending him letter after letter, entreating him for his own sake to yield, and signing himself, as Myddelton had done, "Your ould true friend and comrade"; nor was it of any avail his own people and townsmen, who, being outside the castle walls, were of necessity neutral, but in great straits, begging, petitioning, even threatening him to the same effect. Nothing on earth but the King's personal command should, he swore, release him from his obligation; and the King had probably forgotten all about him.

With some reluctance he at last consented to send a messenger to Charles at Newcastle, and his cousin Thelwall was despatched to the North with a letter. Even in this, it appears, that the indomitable "Blue stockings" had scorned to ask for relief, but merely informed the King in laconic fashion that the castle was hard pressed. Cousin Thelwall however had no such scruples, and by word of mouth added the necessary and readily granted request, and came speeding back to Wales with the Royal command to deliver up the castle in his pocket. Even then this stout old Cavalier was sorely loath to give in, and haggled for days about the terms of surrender, though Denbigh was actually at that time the only castle in Britain still in the King's hands. And when an honourable exit had been wrung from Mytton, who could afford to be generous, and the depleted garrison had marched out with the honours of war, flags flying, drums beating, matches alight at both ends, bullet in mouth, and all the rest of it, there was one last scene to be added to this somewhat dramatic close of the civil war in the West; and this was a very brief one, played by "Yr hen Hosanau Gleision" himself.

For when the Parliamentary troops were drawn up within the castle, and Colonel Salusbury, from the top of the Goblin tower, gruffly asked of their commander whether there was anything more he required of him, it was politely intimated that he had overlooked the little matter of the castle key. This, says tradition, the implacable old Cavalier then flung down among them, with

the uncomplimentary remark, "The world is yours, make it your dunghill."

Ruined in fortune, he then retired to a remote farmhouse called Bottegyr, near Cerrig y druidion, and spent the rest of his life there in obscurity. But the King had not forgotten him, for just before his death he sent him an embroidered cap of crimson silk that he was accustomed to wear himself—the best, no doubt, that the poor man could do, and it is still, I believe, possessed by Salusbury's descendants.

But it is full time indeed we were out of Denbigh, so let us drop down from the castle drawbridge, over the green, and through the other great gateway in the old town walls, and so down the steep alleys to the bustling market-place once more. We must sternly resist all temptation to linger over any old houses that Clough or other worthies may have built, or even to think of looking at what is left of a Benedictine house founded by the Salusburys of Lleweni in the 13th century, at the bottom of the town, near the station. There are many roads we could take which would eventually land us at St. Asaph, which by the nearest is only six miles. But we will turn to the left, and drop down from the town upon its western side, and, after travelling for half a mile or so, turn again to the right, and push along northwards over a second-class but tolerable road, lifted slightly above the vale, which makes for Henllan. In accomplishing the detour we leave upon our right the rambling mansion of Plas Clough, looking somewhat forlorn and sad, beneath the thick shade of ancient trees. We pass near Plas Chambres too, but a small farmhouse now, of thick, grey stone, built in the 15th century, and containing much old woodwork and many quaint devices that recall its far-off distinction; for the Chambres came in with Edward.

But we must turn down a lane here to the west, within a couple of miles of Denbigh, and a few minutes' riding will bring us into the back-yard of Foxhall, an ancient manor of the Tudor period, now a roomy farmhouse, but a place of high

honour as the home of Humphrey Llwyd, the great Welsh antiquary and historian. He died in the reign of Elizabeth, and, to say nothing of his other works, was author of that chronicle of Wales, re-edited by Dr. Powell, which is the chief authority, perhaps, among old Welsh histories, and quite the most entertaining. This family likewise came in with the first Edward and De Lacy. Rosindales, originally from Lancashire, they soon changed their name to Llwyd, or the modern Lloyd. And it might interest some people to know that this familiar surname is simply the Welsh for "grey." Hence greybeard, ancient, venerable. One can well understand, therefore, how widely this was applied in the days before surnames, and how fully it accounts for the great army of Lloyds that now dwell among us. We passed in front of Humphrey Lloyd's tomb at Whitchurch, and his epitaph is quaint enough, I think, to retrace one step in fancy and take note of here—

> "The corps and earthly shape doth rest here tomb'd in your sight
> Of Humphrey Lloid, Mr. of Arte, a famous worthy wight,
> By fortunes hapye lore he Espowsyd and took hys wife to be
> Barbara, seconde syster to the noble Lorde Lumle,
> Splendian, Hare, Jane and John, Humfrey, also a Lumley,
> His children were of whych be dead Jane and eke Humfrey,
> His famous Monument and dedes that lusteth for to see,
> Here in the Epitaph anext set forth at large they be."

But I do not think I should have ventured even thus far off the high-road to see a house that has been so greatly altered as to have no particular architectural interest, or to recall even so famous a literary character as its once owner, if there had not been something of more general interest to be seen on the Foxhall estate. And this there is of a surety, for half a mile or so from Old Foxhall stands New Foxhall, out among the fields, and unapproached by any road or foot-path—a strange sounding name nowadays for the ivy-laden ruin of a graceful and pretentious Tudor manor-house. For this house is another thing altogether from the low two-storied manors of that period so

common in North Wales, lifting as it does its roofless walls to quite a noble height, with its spacious mullioned windows opening wide gaps of blue sky in the dark screen of ivy and twining greenery of all kinds that hides the masonry. A house with a stirring history this, surely, if ever there was one; and you open your ears wide for enough of it to enable you to people the floorless, roofless chambers with some of the figures of its storied past.

New Foxhall has a history, to be sure, and I should imagine a unique one. It is a humbug, in short—not a vulgar humbug, not a manufactured ruin such as you may see any day, but it enjoys, and probably monopolises, the distinction of being a genuine Tudor house that was never inhabited. Or if it was, for only so brief a period as merely to give ground for some discussion on the subject. At any rate, it was never finished; for this considerable pile was only designed for the wing of the great mansion contemplated by the ambitious builder. The latter was a Mr. Panton, Recorder of Denbigh in 1592, and member for the borough, and his sole object was to outshine his neighbour, Mr. Lloyd of Foxhall, son, no doubt, of the historian. Mr. Lloyd, who was a warm but unostentatious man, is said to have regarded the vain and ill-proportioned enterprise of his rival with some grim humour and much self-complacent satire, and to have foretold that in no long time he himself would be the owner of both houses. And so indeed it fell out; for Mr. Panton's resources failing, his half-built house and land had to be sold for what it would fetch, and Mr. Lloyd, for whose special humiliation it had been projected, bought it cheap. So much of the incident Pennant gathered and has given us; but there is a sequel to the tale, my local friends assure me, that escaped the notice of the Flintshire antiquary, and, whether true or not, it is to the effect that, when Mr. Lloyd of Foxhall, to the surprise of his friends, left the fabric untenanted and uncompleted, he did so, not from want of means or opportunity, but of design. He could afford, in fact, to pay

for and enjoy the luxury of perpetuating in this unmistakable fashion the folly of his would-be rival.

Out upon the high-road once more, and heading for St. Asaph, we turn to the right, within a mile, at the old village of Henllan, which is chiefly famous for the tower and the body of its church being wholly independent of each other, and leading a separate existence. Any one, however, with a fondness for folk-lore and witchcraft would do well to take note of the humble tavern here ; for, according to the Rev. Elias Owen it was once the scene of a most marvellous and indeed humorous performance on the part of a local conjuror. The conjurors, I ought to say, were the witch doctors ; but they sometimes did business on their own account, and in Wales were accustomed to assume at times most weird and fanciful attire. A high cap of sheepskin, for instance, with a plume of pigeon feathers, a gaudy coat decorated with talismanic charms, was the official costume of a gentleman who in bygone days worked wonders around Llanarmon. Like the Druids of old, and afterwards the saints, and finally the parsons of the earlier Church, the still more modern conjurors were, in a measure, hereditary. The seventh son of a family of sons could, if he chose, be the happy progenitor of a tribe of conjurors. The descendants of those who had eaten eagle's flesh were also born under the same mystic star.

But to our particular conjuror, who in comparatively modern times, while upon his way from St. Asaph to Pentre Voelas, stopped for refreshment at this same Henllan tavern. He partook, it seems, of ale and bread-and-cheese, but considered the price charged—sixpence for the one and fourpence for the other—as outrageous. Like George Borrow, however, this medicine-man did not think it worth while to dispute a tavern bill, but he had a much more effective method of taking the change out of his hosts, so, paying what was demanded, he slipped a piece of folded paper under the leg of the table and went on his way. No sooner had the servant-maid entered the room to remove the empty jug and glasses, than a strange thing

happened, for she began to dance as fast as her feet would allow her, singing at the same time (in Welsh, it is presumed)

> "Six and four are ten, count it o'er again,
> Six and four are ten, count it o'er again."

The landlord and his wife, who were up stairs, heard the noise with astonishment, which was turned to wrath, in the farmer's case, when descending to the parlour, he saw his maid servant pursuing her mad dance regardless of his presence or his objurgations. Running forward with a view to knocking sense into the crazy girl, the moment his feet touched the floor the good man went off himself upon the same wild career, and there were now two of them dancing as fast as their legs would let them and singing with ceaseless refrain: "Six and four are ten, count it o'er again! Six and four are ten, count it o'er again."

The old lady in the meantime was listening on the top of the stairs, and she could not credit her ears. She was not long, we may be sure, in descending, and when she got to the door, and beheld her husband and the maid flinging themselves about in this godless, demoniacal fashion, we can well believe the storm of indignation that rose within her matronly breast. What would have happened to her husband, if she had reached him, it is ill saying, but the moment she was over the lintel there were three maniacs instead of two making the dust fly and all shouting to the rhythm of their feet: "Six and four are ten, count it over again." This was a pretty state of affairs, but the babel soon brought the neighbours in, and one of them, sharper than the rest, remembered to have seen the witch doctor leave the house. His was the spell that had turned this sober household into a crew of maniacs, beyond a doubt, and he alone could undo it. So a messenger was sent full speed upon his track, and returned in a happily short space of time with directions to remove a piece of paper they would find under the leg of the table. This done, the breathless and exhausted

trio were at last relieved from their involuntary gambols, and perhaps reconsidered their prices for a jug of ale and a crust of bread and cheese. At any rate we will not experiment on their successors, St. Asaph offering the best of good things, though but a modest town.

The park lands of Plas Heaton, clad with much fine timber, now lie for some time upon our right, and those of Galltfaenan on our left. The Heatons, who are still here, came in with Edward and De Lacy, and their motto, "With the rising of the walls," is curiously suggestive. In our front is the village of Trefnant: away beyond it is the wreck of the historic demesne of Lleweni, some miles of crumbling park wall, and a couple of farmhouses made from part of the ruins of the great mansion that once stood there. Hard by is Llanerch, not unworthy of its neighbour, whose grounds and statuary, a hundred years ago, so delighted Dr. Johnson. Beyond all the Clwydian range rises heavenward, the great Catholic College of St. Beuno of the order of Jesuits, standing nobly out upon its lower slopes. Turning sharp to the left we are soon above the Elwy on a high stone bridge of one great arch. It is a beautiful river that rushes far below us and comes breaking out of wooded valleys, and winding through delightful glens from far Llangerniew and beyond it. A clear brown mountain stream, with ash and birch and sycamore drooping their boughs over its glancing rapids below us, and a still reach above, where under dark screens of alders the trout are dimpling the glassy surface as they suck lazily in the bounteous feast of winged luxuries that high June provides. St. Asaph is now close at hand. We are dropping down the valley of the Elwy just where it is hastening through its last reaches to meet the Clwyd. An admirable road, bordered with pleasant meadows, and fringed with big trees, gives us ample time to look about us. Here on our right is the long low ridge which parts the two rivers but for a brief space longer. Yonder, on its crown, within a mile of us, rises the squat grey stump of the old cathedral, not much to look at, as

such things go, to be sure, but a time-honoured landmark in North Wales and a cathedral site since the sixth century. And after all architecture is not everything by any manner of means. Indeed it is a poor soul that can see nothing in an old cathedral but the curving of its arches and the proportions of its roof and the glass in its windows. "The poor little church of Llan Elwy," as Graldus calls it, has never, in any of its successive editions, been able to boast of grandeur or dimen-



The Cathedral, St. Asaph.

sions. But perhaps for a full and picturesque and dramatic history, this centre of the great and stormy diocese of St. Asaph may compare not unfavourably with the more stately fanes of peaceful England, which men fall down and worship, but which have rarely been shaken by war's alarms, nor ever charred with hostile fires, nor rent by two nations and two churches and two languages struggling ever for the mastery, sometimes with the sword, and sometimes with the crozier.

We have again to cross the Elwy, where it sings cheerily over a wide bed of shingle beneath the ridge, upon which is set the little town, clustering round the high perched cathedral, that is in the main responsible for even such quiet prosperity as it enjoys. The population of St. Asaph is under two thousand. But it is quite a dignified little place and has a soul above statistics, seeing the proud position it enjoys. It has had to tremble, however, more than once in former days for this same supremacy. Leicester, as we have seen, cherished dangerous designs against it, while there was constant talk in much earlier times of moving the Cathedral to the protection of the royal castle of Rhuddlan, six miles away towards the sea, which had logic and not personal or local jealousy in the main for its motive. Like almost every religious house in Wales, it was founded in the sixth century, the founder being an exiled bishop (so called) of the Strathclyde Britons, Kentigern, whose successor was one Asaph, a native.

Like nearly every other church in Wales too, it renewed its life on a sounder and greater scale in the 12th century, when it emerged from wickerwork, or wood, into stone, and, dropping the name of St. Elwy, assumed that of its second Abbot St. Asaph. Of the earlier stone fabrics little is known—one was burnt in King Edward the First's time, and its successor by Glyndwr in 1402. For seventy years, which is not wonderful considering what years they were, fire-scorched ruins alone marked the site, and then, in the time of Henry VII., arose the present building, which, though much restored, still remains with Bangor the smallest of our cathedrals. It is quite a stiff climb from the river up the steep narrow main street of the little town to the top of the ridge, where stands the old grey Fane itself amid its bowery precincts, a plain enough edifice, to be sure, but by no means wanting in a certain dignity, which is further enhanced by its commanding site. There is within a beautiful reredos, an effigy of Anian—who was Bishop at the rebuilding after the first destruction of the Cathedral by Edward I.—a

curious oak throne, and several old Bibles, among them an original of Bishop Morgan's first Welsh translation.

A statue of this celebrated divine stands in the Cathedral Yard. His great work, the translation of the Bible into Welsh about the year 1600, was a more momentous business perhaps than it sounds. Queen Elizabeth officially recognised it, but there was great opposition outside Wales on the score that it would perpetuate the Welsh language and Welsh ideas. The gentry had almost abandoned their native tongue. It was hoped the people would, and it was rightly conceived that the fact of religious comfort being wholly administered in English would be an immense lever in this direction. A Welsh Bible, however, put an end to all chance of such development, and it is generally held that the Civil War gave a further check to the English language, even among the higher classes, from the impoverishment that followed, and the great decline in numbers of those who went to the Universities.

I have already, in a previous chapter, said something of the relations of the Welsh and English Church both before and at the time of their fusion. Under the shadow of St. Asaph's Cathedral is the most appropriate ground we shall stand on in our whole journey for a few words about the pretty state of things ecclesiastical that was going on not so very long ago.

From the Restoration, though the robbery and jobbery had begun before that, till 1870 scarcely any Welshmen were appointed to Welsh bishoprics. From 1700 to 1870 *not a single one.* The slight implied in this contemptuous treatment is conspicuous enough, but it seems almost venial beside the lingual absurdity of the case when one remembers that nineteen twentieths of the people, in St. Asaph diocese for instance, could neither speak nor understand the language of their spiritual chief nor he theirs. The suggestion, which, though absurd enough, might be put forward, namely, that in this 170 years there was no Welsh clergyman fit to be a bishop falls at once to the ground when one recalls the conduct, the

motives, and the aims, with few exceptions, of the English prelates, who one after the other filled the Welsh episcopal thrones.

If these men, who were often distinguished scholars, had attempted to do their duty and to grapple with the difficulties that their very personalities and ignorance of the country greatly aggravated, there would be something to be said. But as it is there is nothing, except what is bad. These things are no question of party opinion: all authorities are agreed upon the verdict. Statistics of this sort do not lie; in brief, exaggeration is scarcely possible, for the truth about the Welsh Church is stranger than fiction. There were a few noble exceptions; just enough, as the proverb goes, to prove the rule. In the Stuart period, speaking broadly, Welsh bishoprics were miserably poor. St. Asaph, for example, was commissioned on this account to put a certain number of livings "in commendam," or in other words to alienate the tithes for the bishops' use. The lengths to which this licence was stretched may be illustrated by the fact that one prelate exercised his right to six fold the extent allowed him by law. When Welsh bishoprics were poor they were regarded as stepping-stones to English preferment. English clergymen when ripe for promotion got their first step in Wales, a probationary period they regarded for the most part as a nuisance to be tided over with just such a minimum of residence upon the uncongenial soil as their audacity might be equal to.

There is no instance, however, upon record of any indifference to the income attached, or any disposition to make amends for the robbery that had gone on at the expense of the country parishes. On the contrary, the list of livings placed "in commendam" for the bishops' benefit increased, and in course of time the Welsh bishoprics grew very valuable. Then the tide turned, and divines were translated from English to Welsh bishoprics, and they became often the ultimate reward of men full of honours, or at any rate full of interest. There is no

evidence however that the Englishmen who drew these comfortable salaries in the evening of their lives felt more interest in their people than those who drew the smaller ones upon their upward climb to fame: indeed they lived for the most part in London.

Parochial absenteeism assumed lamentable proportions, and what else with such an example could have been expected? Rectors got leave from their bishops to absent themselves on conditions of appointing a substitute, and they were certainly provided with an effectual pistol to hold to these Right Reverences' heads! This grew into a custom with many of the benefices where it was first inaugurated, and most of the livings in St. Asaph particularly, being in the bishop's gift, the sinecure rectories, became the happy hunting ground of his friends and relations, who as absentees in various parts of the British Empire extracted the tithes from Wales. Numbers of clergymen were inducted to Welsh-speaking parishes who could not speak or read a word of the language. "They read themselves in and their congregation out," as the saying went, nor did the English Heads of the Welsh Church seem to think there was anything in the least illogical or grotesque in the condition of affairs. As to be a Welshman was a distinct bar to all Church promotion: and as the Welsh clergy had no hope of anything but the crumbs, while the imported Saxons—though often indeed even the importation was overlooked—monopolized the plums, it is no wonder that sloth and drunkenness and unclerical behaviour generally were rife among the snubbed, ill-paid lower clergy. And it is no wonder, too, that dissent, though inaugurated with reluctance, advanced with gigantic strides.

As an illustration of the Church in Wales during the early part of the century, I will venture to give a few figures and a few personal details relating to that Prince of pluralists and nepotists, Bishop Luxmore, who reigned over St. Asaph from 1815 to 1830.

He began life as tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch; otherwise it is probable he might have died the rector of an obscure parish in his native county of Devonshire, and had none of the dubious fame that now is his. It was a great thing in those days to be tutor to an embryo duke, for patrons then were Patrons indeed; they ran their protégés against those of other dukes and magnates, and backed them up and stuck to them through life and seemed to enter into the struggle with the same zest they would watch over a favourite from their racing stable. So Luxmore found himself in due course Bishop of Bristol, then of Hereford, and lastly of little St. Asaph, whose exceptional patronage gave a really courageous man exceptional opportunities.

The precise Episcopal income which Luxmore found flowing in I do not know, but he himself managed to enjoy for most, if not the whole of his fifteen years tenure, the tithes of twenty-four parishes which with a few small incidentals, produced the respectable sum of £11,761. But it was this good Bishop's touching loyalty to his family that has done more than anything to immortalize him. The Deanery of St. Asaph, for instance, is in the Bishop's gift, and the moment it fell vacant he bestowed it on his eldest son, and its value then was £1,988. This gentleman also held the following benefices mostly bestowed on him by a fond parent; (1) Chancellor of St. Davids £868 with fees £400; (2) Sinecure rector of Whitford £962; (3) Rector of Darowen £155; (4) Rector of Cradley in Hereford £1,024; (5) Vicar of Bromyard £513; (6) another portion of Bromyard £1,400; (7) Prebendary of Hereford £50; (8) Lessee at a nominal rent for life of the Episcopal manor at Llandegla; (9) Also the tithes of Llandegla and Llanasa £768, for which he paid £100. From other sources of the same nature £450. His annual income from all sources was £8,068 commuted value, estimated as actually received non-commuted value £9,872. He died in 1854. What a thing it was in those days to be the eldest son of a man who had been tutor to a duke! The Rev. J. H. Luxmore, another son, received benefices in

the same fashion to the amount of £2,254. A nephew shared in the good things to the extent of £1,038.

The four Luxmores received almost exactly £25,000 a year.

The average total net income of all the parochial clergy in the diocese of St. Asaph averaged, at this time, about £38,000. Of this, £20,000 went away to habitual absentees or recognised sinecurists. The resident and working clergy received the balance of £18,000: or, to put it another way, the bishop and his family, together with the drones who lived on the Diocese, but not in it, helped themselves to £45,000 a year, while £18,000 was left to those who did, or were supposed to do, its work. And yet to hear some people in England talk and to read what some others write upon the subject one would suppose that the Welsh Church had a past record to struggle with in no material sense differing from that of the English.

One other method of "raising the wind" among the English bishops in Wales and I have done. This was the letting of Church property, tithes, or manors on lives at nominal leases. In the case of a stranger the Bishop capitalised the difference in the shape of a fine often amounting to thousands, investing the same for himself and his heirs for ever—his successor or successors till the lives expired going without the greater part of the revenue. In the case of a member of his family, the fine, of course, was foregone. It seems amazing that the law allowed of such practices; but it did, and there is nothing more to be said. I know that figures and statistics have a dull and formidable look, and may seem out of place in a work of this kind, but I really do not think any one could fairly say that these little addition sums are dull. At any rate, it is impossible to come anywhere near an understanding of modern Wales, unless its religious life and the causes that have so profoundly influenced it are taken into some account.

But now, I think, there is nothing to detain us further in this miniature cathedral town. So we will run down the steep street again to the river, leaving the Bishop's palace (now very differ-

ently occupied) upon the left, and the parish church, where Dick of Aberdaron, whom we shall meet later, lies buried, upon the right, and on down the valley past the "Plough Inn," one of those snug, old-fashioned hostelries that Wales excels in.

It is five miles to Rhuddlan on a fine flat road. The two great estates of Bodelwyddan and Kinmel lie up to our left; but we must not stop to note their glories or touch upon



Rhuddlan Castle.

their past. The Clwyd, upon our right, now merged with the Elwy, begins to slow down into a muddy, tidal stream, and the fresh smell of the sea comes wafted over the lush wide-stretching flats. Yonder, across the river, is what looks, at first, like a great mass of foliage, but as we draw nearer, the red walls bearing the dark, heavy load catch the sun, and we know it to be Rhuddlan Castle. Crossing the bridge and passing through the village, in ancient days a corporate town, we are

soon beneath the gaping crumbled gateway of that great fortress, so often occupied and so highly prized by the sovereigns both of Wales and England. I have already talked so much of castles, and shall have so much yet to say about others further on, I am forced to treat Rhuddlan with scant respect, seeing what great deeds of arms, what splendid ceremonies, what epoch-making councils it has witnessed.

This mouth of the Clwyd, being one of the great strategic points of Wales, there was a castle here from times immemorial; but the fabric before us is mostly the work of Edward I. It is in a noble position on a rocky bluff above the river. Its main walls are of local red stone, mixed with sandstone, and of immense thickness, and are quite complete in height and proportion, as are the massive gate towers at every angle, while the moat is plainly marked the whole way round. Cromwell caused this one to be dismantled as, indeed, he did Denbigh and many other of the feudal castles. There is nothing left, however, within the great space the walls encircle. Save the well in the centre all is smooth turf. Even with the load of ivy that falls in masses from the broken towers and ramparts it is a grim, significant, eloquent witness of the Iron King, who spent three years here, with his foot at last upon the neck of prostrate Wales. It almost takes a mental effort to think of an active, warlike English king spending three years in Wales, and, when one has grasped it, one begins to realise what Welsh affairs at that time really meant.

Hence, too, emanated the famous *Statutes of Rhuddlan*, which divided North Wales into counties, and made laws, and provided for the government of the now wholly-conquered Principality. Conway, Carnarvon, Denbigh and Harlech were building; and the English Court, partly in the castle, partly, no doubt, quartered in the town, here carried on its weighty business and pursued its pleasures. And hither came subservient or submissive and despairing Welsh chieftains, fierce lord-marchers, with an eye to the confiscated lands of Llewelyn and his friends,

bishops and abbots, clerks and draughtsmen, bards and jesters, and a vast array at all times of spearmen and bowmen, of knights and men at arms. But it is quiet enough here now upon a summer's day, for echoes of the little village beyond the castle meadows scarce penetrate the walls. The jackdaws flap lazily above the towers, and half-fledged starlings flutter in the thick ivy. Yonder, through the watergate, you can see the river, such a busy highway when the old, mediæval life was stirring here, but now so dead and silent, slipping, quietly, down towards Rhuddlan bridge, beyond which even yet a few small craft show that its tidal waters are thus far, at any rate, still utilized.

CHAPTER IX

RHUDDLAN TO CONWAY.

TURNING our backs upon the ivied towers of Rhuddlan and facing westward, with Conway, twenty miles off, as our goal, we are on a historic track indeed. It is hard enough to lay the phantoms of the past that spring upon us in the valleys of the Dee and Clwyd at the lightest whisper of the days of old, and clog our path with perplexities. But, here upon this great north shore highway between Chester and Conway, to go no further back than the days of Offa, more blood must have flowed surely than upon any one road in all Britain. To say that the sufferings and the agonies and the triumphs of those dark centuries are written large upon valley and hill top would be merely to say what applies to most parts of the Principality. That their meanings are hidden to most English travellers in the mysteries of a strange, but mellifluous tongue does not make their voice less eloquent when one has enough of it to make them sometimes speak without the aid of an interpreter. *The Mountain of the Arrows*, *The Hill of Slaughter*, *The Rock of Lamentation*, *The Hollow of Execution*, *The Mound of Strife*, *The Valley of Severity*, *the Field of Judgment*, are but examples of spots that merely figure in estate maps, as indicating so much barley or so much pasturage or so much rent.

The most desolate stretch of low ground I know in all North

Wales now lies between us and the sea. It is "the marsh of Rhuddlan." Next to the triumphant and inspiring strains of the "Men of Harlech," the dirge of "Morfa Rhuddlan" is probably the most sung and the best known of old Welsh airs. It was here that Caradoc, King of North Wales, in the year 795 with a great host was overthrown and himself slain by the Mercians who, under their King Offa leagued with other Saxon princes, had already, as we have seen, thrust back the Welsh border to the line of the famous dyke that keeps his memory green.

Cadwaladr, who retired about the year 700 to die, as it is said, in Rome, may fairly be considered the last British king who aspired to any territories outside Wales. For 150 years his successors, with but moderate authority, were kings of Cambria only. Roderic, called the Great, was perhaps the first strong and sole ruler of Wales, and it was he who definitely and with such want of foresight split it up into the three kingdoms of Gwynedd, Powys and Deheubarth, bestowing them upon his three sons respectively. The whole future of Wales till its final conquest so hinged on the jealous distinction between these three principalities, it may be worth noting, for those to whom dates and epochs have any significance, that this occurred about the year 850. A further excuse for thus thrusting figures under the noses of readers who will most likely be wholly bored by them, might be urged in the fact that Egbert's consolidation of Saxon England practically coincides with this splitting up of Wales. But Morfa Rhuddlan nowadays is a wide stretch of bare fertile meadowlands, through which the Clwyd, turbid with tidal water, winds lazily through mud-banks, to the sea. Along the dead horizon, stretches for a mile or more a dark and not too sightly object. It is the town of Rhyl. As there was barely enough of the original village to even supply a name for the modern watering-place, it need not, I think, turn us from the road to Abergele which we are following. Rhyl has no past, but it boasts the strongest air in Wales, and in both senses

of the word I can well imagine the claim is justified. An enthusiastic native, speaking in the hygienic sense, assures me that he has time and again seen people come there for a month, but hurry off in twenty-four hours wholly unable to bear up against the strenuous draughts of oxygen that blow from the sea over the Vale of Clwyd. Indeed a glance at Rhyl literature recalls the well-known story of the western town which was so healthy, that the citizens were at length compelled to shoot a man to start the cemetery.

As we turn our heads, however, and look inland over the



Rhyl.

stump of St. Asaph Cathedral lying low in the widening vale, between the Clwydian mountains and the uplands trending backwards to the Hiraethog wilderness, another side of life at Rhyl to its unprepossessing exterior suggests itself. For there are few watering-places, I fancy, where the cyclist, without undue exertion, can visit so many spots that possess at once both historic interest and natural beauty. There is here no frowning coast range as a damper to such mild enterprises, but the rider can sail away from the sea-shore, without let or hindrance, over the network of excellent roads that penetrate the Vale of

Clwyd : or can traverse the coast strip that lies beneath the limestone uplands of Flint, or trace the Elwy through its winding woodlands, or follow on the pleasant, but not as yet striking road that is now carrying us towards Conway.

The wide mouth of the vale is well passed as we traverse the main street of the large old-fashioned village of Abergele ; and as we are at the same time drawing closer to the sea, so also are the hills drawing closer to us. Some thirty years ago the name of Abergele was for a brief period in everybody's mouth. A catastrophe, still, I think, unmatched in the railroad history of this country, gave it such unfortunate distinction—to wit, the burning of a passenger train by an explosion of petroleum, involving a fearful loss of life with a wealth of ghastly detail. The pretty village of Llandulas, some four miles further on, calls for no remark, except that the hills are here beginning to press close upon our left hand, and lifting their somewhat fantastic summits of naked limestone many hundred feet above our heads. The strip between our road and the sea is growing narrower, and after crawling up a long and formidable ascent, we find ourselves squeezing round the face of the famous promontory of Penmaen Rhos, on whose rocky feet the waves are breaking far beneath us. It is not as a natural object, however, that this stern barrier on the otherwise easy route from Chester to the Conway, lays claim to celebrity ; for, compared with the sea-walls of Snowdonia, at either entrance to the village of Penmaenmawr, it is as nothing. But from the North Carnarvon coast the boldest of invaders, with rare exceptions, shrank ; while here we are on a highway that echoed with continuous strife for centuries, and of which this single obstacle, the only spot where cliff and ocean meet, was the chief strategic point.

Having said this much, the hopelessness of seriously approaching the memories which cling to such a spot will be obvious. But there is one event it is impossible to pass over, because Shakespeare has lifted it out of the unpopular

domain of history, and another matter, too, of which I have been anxious to say something, ever since we dropped down into the Vale of Clwyd, and this is not only the last opportunity, but the place is in itself sufficiently suggestive to afford some excuse. In regard to the first, there is little doubt but that this is the point between Conway and Rhuddlan, where the unfortunate Richard II. was arrested by the troops of his cousin Henry of Bolingbroke and entered upon his doom. Shakespeare passes over this particular incident, and goes on, it will be remembered, to the memorable scene at Flint. One does not look, however, to the immortal Bard of Avon for bare facts. It is sufficient that he has illuminated the dramatic side of Richard and his faithful followers' progress along the coast of Wales. The humble chronicler comes happily to our rescue and supplies the details.

From this windy promontory we can see on the one hand as far as the mouth of the Dee, on the other to the Carnarvon mountains and the Menai Straits; the whole route, in fact, trodden by the miserable Richard when weighed down with the sense of his present wretchedness and by the shadow of his impending fate. We may recall how Bolingbroke, not yet crowned, but virtually elected by the English nation, lay at Flint with a great army, "Londoners mostly": how Richard, tardily returning from his Irish campaign, found himself on landing in South Wales deserted wholesale by his army: how the faithful Earl of Salusbury, hurrying on before him to Conway, collected for his master a large force of Welshmen, but was utterly unable to keep them together in the face of the King's lethargic movements:—

> "Oh, call back yesterday, bid time return,
> And thou shalt have ten thousand fighting men!
> To-day, to-day, unhappy day, too late,
> O'erthrows thy joys, friends, fortune, and thy state."

Northumberland, who was of course in those days Bolingbroke's staunchest friend, was sent on by the very road we are

travelling with a body of troops to secure Richard's person. It was behind this rocky barrier he left his men, and proceeded to Conway, where he approached the King, we are told, in the guise of a humble and loyal emissary of his loyal and well-meaning cousin of Bolingbroke, who had no thoughts of the Crown, much less of touching a hair of Richard's head! But the invitation to the latter to come to London and get rid of his evil councillors was so peremptory, that the spoilt and



Conway Castle from up the river.

puling King swore aside to his friends that if ever his cousin fell into his power, he would "put him to such a cruel death that it should be spoken of even in Turkey." Actually, however, these two men bent their knees before the altar in Conway church, and took their oaths upon the sacred elements that they meant nothing but well towards each other,—Percy with his tongue in his cheek, and Richard with frightful curses in his heart. It was not, however, till the cavalcade sur-

mounted this fatal headland of Penmaen Rhos, and the King caught sight of Earl Percy's troops drawn up behind it, that he realised the extent of his humiliation and the full nature of his position. The meeting with Bolingbroke at Flint—the long indignity of the ride to London on a sorry horse, the compulsory abdication and subsequent mysterious death are matters of more or less common knowledge, with which we have no concern here.

It was in the year 887 and in the days of Anarawd, son of Roderic the Great and Prince of North Wales or Gwynedd, that the other affair occurred. And we make bold to mention it here, since had things gone otherwise, this entire northern strip of Wales from Cheshire to the Conway river might have become wholly Anglicised, and be even as Shropshire is to-day, instead of being as Welsh in every respect worth mentioning as Cardigan or Merioneth. For at this date the Saxons had actually achieved for the first and only time in their separate history, not a mere nominal conquest, a question of homage or tribute, but a real grip of the country, and what looked very like a permanent settlement. No Welsh counties were formed till the Edwardian Conquest, and the five cantreds, or hundreds, which composed the land between the Dee and Conway were collectively known as the Perfeddwlad. The Vale of Clwyd was the heart of this considerable district, and the Saxons seem really to have driven out the Welsh and settled themselves in their places. Fortunately for the latter, however, the same race from whom the true Cymry had themselves come, the Britons of Strathclyde, of north-west England, that is to say, were being just now as sorely harried by the Saxons and Danes as their ancestors had been four centuries earlier by the Picts. In despair they decided to follow the same course, and turned their eyes naturally towards their Welsh kinsmen.

They did not come, like the others, as invaders. Times had changed and circumstances were different. On the contrary, for though they brought with them ships and property and arms,

they came as suppliants to Anarawd, asking him to allot them a portion of his dominions. Anarawd, having lately lost the Perfeddwlad, must have been himself very badly cramped for room. At any rate, he did not at first see his way to providing for this host of new-comers. But at length a bright and business-like idea struck him, which was to give the whole of the territory to his newly found kinsmen, providing they could drive the Saxons out. The Strathclyde Britons had not much choice. It seemed no doubt a somewhat desperate adventure. But they at once fell to work, if not merrily, at any rate with a vigour that was most effectual, and all the more so, perhaps, as quaint old Dr. Powell says, "because necessity was behind to give it an edge." The intruding Saxons were driven headlong out of Wales, hundreds of them being slain, and these north-western Britons settled down upon the reconquered ground.

But it was not likely such an ignominious expulsion would be tamely submitted to, and the Saxons prepared for a great effort to regain the country. So large were the forces assembled this time on the Mercian border that the Strathclyde Britons trembled for their newly won position, and carrying all their cattle and effects across the Conway, they begged of Anarawd to support them in this their dire hour of need. The King of Gwynedd rose to the occasion, and with the hardy warriors of the Snowdon mountains behind him, joined the sore-pressed settlers of the Perfeddwlad and inflicted a great defeat on the Mercian host within two miles of Conway. Great numbers of the Saxons were slain, and the rest pursued across the border, the Welsh following and carrying fire and sword through the adjacent Saxon settlements. So Flint and Northern Denbigh were saved from Saxon taint, and remain to this day, with trifling exceptions, Celtic in thought and speech and habit. But the old Perfeddwlad still bears evidence of the taller and more stalwart race of Britons from the North that took up its abode there in the ninth century. At any rate, it is a

cardinal article of faith with Welshmen of ethnological leanings that such is the case.

The North Welsh mountains shrink, as a rule, from actually wetting their feet in the waves; or shall we rather put it that the waves themselves decline a contest with these stupendous masses, and prefer to play upon the pleasant yellow sands that mostly gird the Cambrian coast. This seems the likelier thought, for tales of drowned villages and submerged cantrefs are rife enough around these shores, as we shall presently see. Indeed, there is no doubt of the former aggressiveness of the Irish Sea, even on this North coast. There is a tombstone in Abergele churchyard describing the dwelling of the deceased as being three miles north of that spot, or, to put it in other words, at least two miles out to sea, under present conditions; while the incontrovertible Pennant tells us that the remains of forests were obvious enough, even in his day, beneath the waves.

As I was saying, however, one does not go to North Wales —short, that is to say, of Anglesey and Lleyn—for storm-lashed promontories and booming caverns. When, however, its mighty uplands do condescend to come forward and stand alone above the waves, where in these islands, nearer than some Hebridean solitude or some far Atlantic-washed Hibernian steep, can you match them? Where is the like of Penmaenmawr, or where of the Northern Peak of the Rivals? both savage and pitiless of aspect, as becomes the outposts of a mountain group that looks to Snowdon as its chief, and both towering 1,600 feet above the sea, a pile of naked rock and scarred precipice.

As to the two capes of Orme, the greater and the less, they are fine enough, but they come within the scale of English sea-coast altitude, being under a thousand feet. And if the seas which tumble at the foot of Penmaenmawr must be admitted to do so with somewhat broken force, that great, weird head-land of the Western Orme asks no quarter, and gets none, from the storms that burst in unbroken fury upon its precipitous sides.

Most of this country we can see lying before us as we turn the crucial headland of Penmaen Rhos. It is a beautiful enough stretch, this undulating, broken lowland, resting between the sea and the receding and densely-wooded hills, and ending abruptly with the craggy sides and steep pastures of the huge hump of the Orme's head. But it is a thought too civilised and ornate, the fact of the matter being, that the Saxon has laid his golden hand a bit too heavily on this north coast of Wales. In other parts of the Principality the exotic element is concentrated for the most part in watering-places. But here the watering-places filter out on either side into private villas, and the villas give place in turn to new plantations and turreted mansions that may be delightful to spend a summer in, but are singularly ill-attuned to the condition of mind in which one would wish to approach a country like North Wales. You could not spoil this Denbigh coast, but it has been greatly marred by the predilection—and who, indeed, could blame them—which Liverpool and Manchester have shown for it.

Perhaps here, even more than on the less accessible hillsides which actually look down on England, the tenacity of the Welsh tongue impresses one profoundly. We are slipping down between rows of houses, shops, villas, gardens, parks, mansions. Mile after mile of ornate civilisation hugs the mountain foot and lies against the sea. The Irish mail goes panting by. Busy little stations—only less lively in the winter than in the summer and all a-flutter with the latest penny weeklies from London printing presses—are in daily and hourly touch with the great cities of the Midlands, and the North. Coasting steamers are ploughing their way over the dimpled summer sea. Atlantic liners are hastening to or from the mouth of the Mersey. Busy stone quarries are rattling down their produce into boats or trucks, and the roar of blasting in remoter hills falls from time to time upon the ear. Bicycles skim in strings or clouds along a triumph of nineteenth century road-making. Telegraph and telephone wires cross and recross each other in the air. Old

Colwyn straggles on to the new town of Colwyn Bay, and Colwyn Bay though big and, shall we say, cockneyfied enough, is but a centre for an abounding neighbourhood of prosperous country villas, which stretch almost to the Conway. Here, if anywhere, you would think this strange and ancient and persistent tongue must of a surety shrivel before rampant modernism. Not a bit of it! It is true, your English would rarely be confronted with the blank stare or embarrassed look common enough five miles inland. But because all these



Colwyn Bay from Penmaen Rhos.

people talk English to you, it does not make them one whit more inclined to talk it among themselves, nor do they. Even here all notices of auctions or village concerts or local Eisteddfodau are in Welsh, while in every chapel which presses its inartistic proportions upon the road side, saving, of course, those patronised by visitors, the old tongue of the Cymry is seated as firm as is the faith in a rousing forty minutes' sermon and a full suit of black.

But amid all the wealth and prosperity that has gathered

along the old North Shore track, there is no reason to forget the great ones of the past who struggled with its difficulties generation after generation and century after century, till Welsh history, in its stirring and dramatic sense, closed at the downfall of Glyndwr. To touch but lightly on the long procession, one may think of the Roman Suetonius Paulinus on his way to that great slaughter of the Druids on the banks of the Menai, which tradition regards as the downfall of their caste: of Helena the mother of Constantine: of the Saxon Edgar, and of Harold also, who was here three years before he fell at Hastings: of William Rufus, and the second Henry, and the hapless John: of Henry the Third, and his great son: of Henry of Bolingbroke, and his no less illustrious one: of Llewelyn the Great, and Llewelyn the Last: of Roderic, and Caradoc, and of Anarawd, and the mighty Owen Gwynedd. This is of a truth but to name a few of those in whose steps we are immediately treading, though in how different a fashion! For this was of all others the road of bloody surprises, of fatal ambuscades, to which the overhanging wooded hills, and the narrow spit of land between them and the sea, gave special advantage.

There was little alternative in those days, but to follow it; for the whole inland country between the Clwyd and the Conway is a vast upland, riven this way and that by deep and tortuous valleys, and even to-day but little known by strangers, and difficult, except upon one single road, to traverse. So English captains, no matter what forces were behind them, trod this treacherous track with helmet on head, and hand fast gripped upon their sword-hilt, and a lively apprehension lest each lateral glen, and each bosky cliff, might peradventure launch upon their long-extended columns an avalanche of Merioneth spearmen and Carnarvon archers. "In their first attack," says Giraldus, "the Welsh are more than men, in their second less than women." And as we have dragged in Giraldus—though who indeed that has ever made his acquaintance could

move about in Wales without dragging him in?—it is only fair that we should remember how he too, as guide, philosopher and friend to Archbishop Baldwin on his crusade-preaching campaign through Wales, passed this way from Conway, being hospitably entertained by Prince David ap Owen Gwynedd at Rhuddlan, and celebrating High Mass at St. Asaph, in the year of our Lord 1189.

It is indeed hard work to get about North Wales in this garrulous fashion, with anything like expedition. Every condition of the country seems in a conspiracy to keep alive the embers of a past, more remote than, as a rule, one's fancy lingers over in England. And by this I do not mean a past of cromlechs and "dolmens" and round huts and Druidical circles and grass-grown camps, with which, I need not say, Wales literally bristles. It is the duty of a good guide-book to point out where these may be found, and then to leave its readers to let their fancy wander in the dim regions of conjecture, or to puzzle their brains with the fierce controversies and divergent theories of antiquaries. But this is not a guide-book, and even if I were equipped to enter the lists of prehistoric controversy, I am quite sure that the lay reader would not thank me, while the expert—and the Principality abounds in experts, more power to them!—would turn and rend me in a fashion I should not like. This is by no means to suggest that most of us set such limitations to our fancy that it withers up before the dumb survivors of an age that for us has neither speech nor language, nor even tradition. For myself, particularly if the weather be genial, I can spend at any time an edifying and wholly futile half-hour beside a cromlech or a Druid circle; but to give the public the substance of such philanderings would be preposterous indeed.

It is only upon memories that are real flesh and blood, and before stones that speak I feel any temptation to linger here, and Wales is full of such. When we traverse our quiet English roads the past is rich enough; but scenes of blood, at any rate,

do not usually fill its foreground. Our English heroism and patriotism has been chiefly of a defiant and aggressive sort. The blood of our people, for so long as we care to remember, has been shed mostly upon hostile or alien soil or upon stormy seas. The Norman Conquest, from a Saxon point of view, is not a glorious memory, even with the assistance of Mr. Freeman. Our English battlefields recall the struggles, vital as their after import may be, of factions merely, of conflicting interests, or conflicting opinions. There is no pathos about them (Heavens, what have I said !), I mean the peculiar sort of pathos that hangs about fields where men struggled long and passionately against great odds in defence of their native soil and their race.

What is the romancist doing all this time? Mr. Arthur Balfour said recently that the modern novelist had exploited the furthest ends of the earth for material, and was now at his wits' end for fresh ground. It is not creditable to his sagacity or to his acquaintance with his own country or with British history that this mine of wealth has remained so long untouched or practically so. The typical Welsh story in both languages so far as I know it, runs chiefly on chapels, ministers and Sunday-schools, and however excellent are these things individually they do not furnish an inspiring theme or lend themselves to dramatic situations or glowing prose. Fancy if Scott had been a Welshman! After all, though, perhaps it would take a native to do this properly. Yet as our ancient enemies have shown themselves so singularly shy of painting their romantic past in a fashion that would be either intelligible or attractive to Saxon readers, it is full time that somebody else should try and do justice to the outstanding figures and dramatic scenes that crowd its canvas. At any rate I make a present of the suggestion to aspirants for fame in historic fiction.[1]

What finer picture, for instance, is there in all history than that of the last Llewelyn, standing with his back against the Snowdon mountains, which are now by the way looming high

[1] Since the above was written matters have moved in this direction.

in front of us, and defying a power strong enough to crush France, as it was soon to do! Even Englishmen and foreigners were touched with pity and admiration, says Mathew of Paris, who was assuredly no Welshman. "But woe to the wretched English," says the same author, "who, trodden under foot by every foreigner, allowed the ancient liberties of their kingdom to be extinguished and were not put to shame by the example of the Welsh."

Llewelyn, our elementary history-books for the most part would persuade us, or at least lead us to infer, was a pestilent and



Between Abergele and Colwyn Bay.

irreclaimable rebel, who, in spite of Edward's loving indulgence and generosity in leaving him, out of his whole Principality of North Wales, the four Lordships of Snowdon, would not lie quiet within them, and keep treaties which had been presented at the sword's point. They do not tell us in what fashion all this Perfeddwlad, and Merioneth too, just wrested from the Welsh, was governed; and that it was farmed out to Norman adventurers, whose sole aim was to wring the last farthing from the country, and make the life of the wretched Welshman not worth living. Nothing is said of the petition of the "noble men of

Tegengle," or Flint, which painted a veritable reign of terror. Nor is there any hint of the bitter cry of despair which even the Norman chronicler tells us goaded Llewelyn, who at least was living in comfortable if reduced circumstances himself, to head that last hopeless struggle. There is something fine even in his rejection of Edward's overtures so insistently urged in person by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who came all the way to Aber for the purpose, and both pitied and admired him.

He was offered a whole English county with a big revenue in lieu of Snowdon, and handsome settlements for all his family. But Llewelyn wanted no English counties, and could provide for his own children. These wild mountains, he replied, had come down to him from the days of Brutus, and even if he himself were cowardly enough to hand them over to the tender mercies of Norman barons, to be treated as Anglesey and the four Cantreds or the Perfeddwlad were being treated, his people would not hear of such base submission.

His end is more familiar, perhaps, than the struggles which preceded it. How, for instance, he was enticed by treachery from his army in South Wales, and then slain and decapitated by a Norman soldier and his gory head washed in the famous spring at Builth, which still, as everybody knows, is tinged at times with blood. How it was then sent across Wales to King Edward at Conway, who, receiving it with unbounded joy, forwarded it by sea to Anglesey, there to be displayed to the gaze of the English army, that, by bridges of boats over the Menai, was trying to dislodge Llewelyn's brother and his army from the defiles of Snowdonia. How the gruesome trophy was next started off upon a longer journey, even to London itself, where it was met outside the city by crowds of people, and then, with a crown of ivy, in mockery of the old Welsh prophecy that a British prince should one day be crowned in London, was fixed upon the point of a lance and carried in triumph by a horseman through the streets to the pillory, and from the pillory to its final resting-place above the gateway of the Tower.

Something of all this Englishmen may perhaps remember, when their memory is jogged, though the fate of the soon-vanquished David, who was quartered and disembowelled at Shrewsbury, and his head sent to moulder by his brother's on the Tower, is, I think, an incident of much more hazy recollection—outside Wales, that is to say, for it would be strange indeed if the Welsh had forgotten that it took the Normans over two hundred years to conquer them. Yet, with a wholly delightful and self-complacent inversion of fact and confusion of ideas, how often do we hear certain characteristics, real or imaginary, of our Cambrian fellow-countrymen attributed to the fact of their being a conquered race! The less perhaps we say about this the better. And in the meantime here we are upon the shores of the Conway, and yonder, across the broad river, heaving and palpitating with the strength of a flowing tide, rises the noble Norman pile, that speaks to us in such eloquent and significant fashion of this same conquest. I don't know anything, upon our side of the English Channel, at any rate, at all like Conway. There are few places anywhere more nobly situated; but I am now speaking, not of nature, but of stone-work. York has walls still standing, so has Chester, so has Shrewsbury; but they are lost in the size of the towns they enclose, even if they any longer could be said to enclose them. You examine them, or walk round them, and there's an end of it. They form no feature worth mentioning in the distant view of these places. In Conway, however, which is a small town and an old one, its walls are everything. And from the opposite bank of the river you might in very truth be looking upon some mediæval scene cut directly out of an illustrated edition of Froissart.

As the place slopes gradually upward from the river brink, and is in shape something of a triangle, or, as some say, of a Welsh harp, you see the whole of it at a glance; and a very complete whole it is. For over a mile of embattled walls, far overtopping the gables of the houses within them, and strengthened by one-and-twenty towers, rising at regular

intervals, enclose the ancient town in strikingly dominating and protecting fashion. There are no suburbs—none, at any rate, near by, or obvious enough to interfere with the delusion that you are back in the days of the Plantaganets. There are, moreover, four gates, and, if you wish to enter Conway in these times, as in those, you must pass under one or other of their massive portals.

It would be a gem of its kind, this old town, though it were set amid a Lincolnshire fen, instead of in the foreground of a scene that even without it is generally sufficient to wake up the drowsiest passenger that ever sat on a window-seat in the morning mail from Holyhead. The bold heights of the Conway mountain and Castel Seiont rising sheer behind the town; the broad river gleaming in its front at high tide, full half a mile in width, and reflecting on its surface the shadows of tower and battlement and the wooded cliffs that stretch along its shores. Southward, beyond the sheen of the wide waters, more lake here than river, the mountains of the Snowdon range lift their ridges one above the other till the higher summits raise familiar outlines against the sky-line. Down the river, a short two miles away, you may see, should any breeze be blowing from the north or west, the white waves tumbling on the sandy bars beyond Deganwy. High on its green hill, too, a single fragment of masonry recalls the famous castle that for five centuries before Conway rose defended this ancient entrance into the inner sanctuary of Gwynedd. While on the north, and beyond the river mouth, looms up the vast hump of the greater Orme.

We must not, however, stop here now, trying to paint in feeble words what a whole colony of artists devote much of their days to attempting upon canvas. We shall have to pass this way again, in any case, on our way up the Conway valley, and I shall then take the opportunity of running across the bridge, and saying something about King Edward's town and castle, and the part they have played in olden days.

But in the meantime we must not ignore altogether this strange block of lumpy broken country, known as the Creuddyn peninsula, a dozen square miles perhaps in area, lurching out into the sea, with the two Orme headlands forming the horns of its extremities, and Llandudno lying between them, its dominant influence:—a windy, treeless, sheep-pasture for the most part, till the tourist and the builder took so much of it for their own. Even yet, between the villages and villas and scrubby plantations of new country houses, there are rare sweeps of gorse-lit common, and billowy uplands of



Llandudno and the Great Orme.

emerald turf, that culminate in wild and unexpected outbreaks of naked crags and sterile rocks. Eighty years ago, or thereabouts, the "Queen of Welsh Watering-places" was a cluster of fishermen's huts tucked away under the shoulder of the Great Orme, and the tiny church of St. Tudno, which still occupies a lonely perch where the waves dash upon cruel and cavernous cliffs at the back of the promontory, was more than sufficient for their needs. As such things go, modern Llandudno would really seem to justify its self-complacent claims to supremacy, for it sweeps in undeniably imposing fashion round the noble bay, with its incomparable sentries on guard upon either hand.

Indeed it is no longer content with this mile or more of level sea front, but has clambered several hundred feet up the precipitous sides of the Great Orme. The visitor has now ample choice. He can sport with the North-country 'Arry or the negro minstrel on the sand, or he can perch himself in almost inaccessible seclusion, and look down upon the merry crowds darkening the shore like swarms of ants, and on the white-winged pleasure-boats skimming the dimpled sea. But twenty Llandudnos could not spoil the Great Orme, for it is not merely a headland, but a world to itself, where, lifted high up between sea and sky, you may wander for miles over its white ribs of limestone and sweeps of velvet turf.

In late autumn too, if you would court solitude, you will probably find it here, and yourself alone, save for the handful of squatters scattered about in white-washed cottages at far intervals, who reap some sort of harvest, no doubt, in the season from the giddy world beneath. The great charm, however, of Llandudno, to my thinking, is the noble outline which the Carnarvon mountains present to even the dwellers in its streets. What can be said therefore of the outlook from the top of the Great Orme? Nothing. For the attempt would merely be to detail every mountain top, and epitomise the physical geography of half North Wales.

From its eastern edge, the whole Creuddyn peninsula lies like a map at your feet. Amid so much that is new and so much that is bare, three or four old country homes, half hidden in wood, offer a significant contrast to their surroundings, and suggest the days when their owners collected a rental of perhaps five shillings an acre, from all the region, now so populous and valuable, and were glad to get it. But to any Welshman with a turn for genealogy, and indeed to any one who has a fancy for odd scraps of family history such as illustrate former days, these old houses suggest much more than this. Two of them, Gloddaeth and Bods-gallyn, are even still as full of dignity as they are of years, being the property and the residences of the

Mostyn family. The others, Penrhyn and Marl, have long broken with their past. Penrhyn lies nearest the sea, but on the further or eastern side of the Little Orme. It is now a farm-house, but a typical old Tudor building of the smaller kind, such as even squires of great consequence in Wales were for generations content to live and die in.

Now in the reign of Queen Elizabeth it so happened that a family of the name of Pugh possessed this property. They were



Road round the Great Orme.

zealous Catholics, whereas their neighbours were uncompromising adherents of the Reformed Faith. They even kept a priest of their own, and had a chapel, the remains of which may yet be seen among the farm buildings. They were therefore, it need hardly be said, thought capable of any enormities by their neighbours and at length a domestic, who was keeping company with a man-servant from the neighbouring house of Gloddaeth, let out the dreadful truth. With

the assistance, presumably, of sympathisers from different parts, the Penrhyn faction were on a certain date to fall on their Protestant neighbours in Creuddyn, and to put them all without mercy to the sword. This was a terrible thing, and must of course have been due to the machinations of the priest. The neighbouring squires had, of course, no option but to act promptly on the information, and, gathering their people together, rode to Penrhyn, and, surrounding the house, demanded that the nefarious cleric should be handed up forthwith. But they had not been sufficiently stealthy perhaps in their preparations, for the bird had flown. He was reported, however, to be lurking in the neighbourhood, and a zealous search was instituted; but it was of no avail, and, after some days of watching and hunting, they were just about to give the matter up in despair, when a boat reported that smoke had been seen issuing from a crevice on the sea-ward side of the Little Orme. These rugged cliffs were searched, and in due course the wretched priest was found hidden in a cave, was dragged out, and put to a summary and ignominious death.

At a certain period, much later on, it so happened that the inmates of this same manor of Penrhyn were a young man and his two sisters. The former, whether on business or pleasure bent history does not say, departed for a long sojourn in foreign climes. Before leaving, however, this young gentleman, with some sense of presentiment possibly, but, at any rate, with singular forethought, drove the tooth of a harrow into a pear-tree in the orchard, and placed a needle in a crevice in the kitchen roof. The date of his intended return passed by, but he gave no sign, and as time went on and nothing was heard of the wanderer, the two sisters, giving him up for dead, and at the same time according to the gossips showing no due decent sense of sorrow and regret, entered into full possession of the property. It seems, however, that long as they had waited, they were, after all, premature in their action, for in due course a ragged and weather-beaten young man turned up, with a long

tale of sufferings and hardships, and claimed to be the long-lost brother. The sisters, however, would have none of him. It was in vain that he pointed out the harrow tooth in the pear-tree and the needle in the kitchen roof; it was in vain the neighbourhood took up his cause and believed in him, for the ladies in possession stoutly maintained he was an impostor; and his sisters surely ought to have been the best judges! But tradition says their avarice was stronger than their affections, and that there was more method than scepticism in their conduct.

Worse, however, is to come; for, since it was more than likely that the law and the young women might have taken different views, it was undoubtedly convenient for the latter that the claimant should disappear; and he did disappear, and in such mysterious fashion that the ladies fell under the frightful suspicion of being their brother's murderers. Nothing, however, could be proven against them, and they enjoyed the estate for the rest of their lives—if indeed there was any enjoyment in leading a life shunned by their neighbours, and suffering, as tradition says they did suffer, every misfortune in the way of cattle-disease and blighted crops that can befall an agriculturalist. Long after they and their generation had passed away—indeed I think it was within the memory of some yet alive—a skeleton was found in an old lime-pit, just behind the house, as to the identity of which the neighbourhood never entertained the slightest doubt. Was it the skeleton of a Tichborne or an Orton? Was the sisters' crime fratricide or only homicide, or did they go to their grave under a foul and false calumny? Who can tell? In any case, they are now resting from their troubles yonder, upon the ridge stretching to the sea, under the venerable church tower of Llandrillo-in-Rhos, whose rector, by the way, to wind up a dismal tale with a curious fact, still is entitled to, and actually receives, every tenth salmon taken in the net at an ancient weir in his parish.

I have not left much space for Gloddaeth; but it is a fine old house of many periods, even to the oldest, and on that account

as well as of the pictures and treasures within, it is thrown open on certain days to the public. One Gryffydd ap Rhys lived here about the year 1448, and lost all his eight children, save one, by the plague. The dirge of his friend and bard, Ddu ap Siensen on this occasion is preserved to us; and this is the late Canon William's translation of a portion of it—"Gryffyth is downcast, wanting his branches. Piteous, by the holy Oswald, was his cry and salt tears. There were once eight of



The Church of Llandrillo-in-Rhos.

them; one only now exists. The eldest was Daffydd. He went to heaven when his day came. Alas! to-night there is great lamentation in putting William upon the bier. And fair Rhys tarried not behind after the worthy William. Deep in the grave was dropped Llewelyn, not less lamented. Five in number were the sons. The fifth was the beloved Sion. For the daughters there is great grief. The youthful Catherine was the eldest, whose complexion equalled the serene sky or the

summer morn; the seventh, the fair Anna. One series of blossoms, one mind they will be in heaven. One form, one light, one heavenly company."

Like Gloddaeth, the grey gables of Bodsgallyn, just across the valley, look disdainfully upon the far and wide workings of the modern builder, jerry and otherwise, from amidst a world of woodland, and well it may, seeing that in the fifth century it was the seat (Bod-y-Caswallon) of that famous king. Hugh Wynne, who owned it during the civil wars, raised a regiment of horse for Charles, the people of this part, as elsewhere in Wales, being, for the most part, staunch loyalists.

Pushing onwards through the narrow lanes towards Conway, the beautiful old mansion of Marl, standing in a hollow at the foot of a wooded cliff, brings one up short, and with delightful unexpectedness, before its wide-open gate, for it is now a convalescent home, and there is much going and coming of invalids from Birmingham. The present mansion would seem to be of the Queen Anne period; but adjoining it is the ruin of a Tudor house, absolutely buried in ivy and with large trees not only bending their tall tops over the roofless walls, but actually growing within them. All sorts of people, bearing for the most part famous names, have here, as at Gloddaeth and Bodscallon, lived and died. But the fame of the names and of the men themselves, being rather provincial than national, I hope I may be forgiven for passing over worthy deeds and worthy folk, and raking up a bit of scandal that can hurt no one's feelings now and is characteristic of a period. Indeed it amounts in any case to very little, but, having got this far, I must out with it, and remark that the sister of the squire who reigned here in the time of George the Second was a handsome and a very dashing lady at that monarch's court. We all remember what a hero the Duke of Cumberland was among the English, particularly after his valiant conduct at the victory of Dettingen. At any rate, he was the best commander we then had, if this is not saying very much, and he was also the King's son. So I

daresay the young lady from Marl, according to the ethics of her set and time, felt almost honoured by a preference shown for her charms by the royal and burly hero. A price however had to be paid for this little bit of social distinction, and she wrote to her brother of Marl, telling him of her situation. The squire doesn't seem to have been altogether flattered by the prospect, at any rate he appears to have been by no means eager for the interesting event to come off at Marl, but he placed at this lady's disposal another house he owned far up the Conway Valley in the wild mountain country near Dolwyddelan. Here the child was born ; and more than one of its descendants are, I believe, at this day highly respected members of society not a thousand miles from Conway, within sight of whose walls we have now once more arrived.

CHAPTER X

THE VALE OF CONWAY

A FEW minutes after leaving Marl we are again in sight of Conway. But the best road to the bridge and Llandudno junction—synonymous terms—strikes the river close to the village of Deganwy, which will assuredly detain us for a time. Not because it is adjacent to one of the best golf links in Wales and contains a delightfully situated and comfortable hotel; I hope I know my duty better than that. Nor yet because as an architectural creation it commends itself in the faintest degree to any of the artistic senses. On the contrary, the original inhabitant who is fond of recalling the place, when he and his family composed all that there was of it, is barely past middle age, and the mark of the contractor lies as heavily upon this, as upon most seaside places that are alive for three months of the year, and dead for nine.

I have no doubt that the patrons of the Queen of Welsh Watering-places, as they stop here at the little station for the collector to take up their tickets, sniff mightily at a place that would seem to have nothing to make up for its painful lack of antiquity, in the way of marine festivity. Indeed I have myself more than once heard it reflected upon from the train as "a God-forsaken hole." But then points of view are different, and the gentleman who leans to this one would almost

certainly refer to Llewelyn ap Iorwerth as an old bloke or even a Johnny, and would think nothing of carving his own distinguished name on that monarch's coffin in the Gwydir chapel if he were not closely watched.

Deganwy beyond a doubt is no dream of brick and stone. But, after all, this is less than nothing. It is the outlook from such places and their environment that count, and at Deganwy these are entirely delightful. Immediately beneath its windows the river discharges itself into the sea in curious fashion; for, after playing for many miles over broad sandy flats, the haunt at the tide's ebb of clouds of sea-fowl, here, by Deganwy, it suddenly contracts and rushes forward to the sea between high shelving banks of firm sand and pebbles. Behind the village, sheep pastures and furzy commons trend upwards to two great crests of rock like the humps on a dromedary's back. In the hollow between them stands an inconsequent fragment of masonry, all that is left of the once famous castle which has given its name to the village, and for that matter brought us here.

Twice in each day, past the very door-steps of Deganwy, and in a clean, firm, deep channel, perhaps 300 yards in width, the mountain waters of the Conway and the Lledr, the Llugwyand the Machno, and of a hundred hill-born brooks, go whirling to the sea; and twice a day the sea comes surging back through these narrows, filling the whole estuary above them to Conway bridge, and from Conway bridge deep into the hills, whither we shall shortly follow it. Towards Llandudno and the Orme, a couple of miles away, a pleasant sandy shore divides the sea from wild commons all aglow with gorse and bracken, rolling here into sand-hills where tufty, bent grass quivers precariously in the wind, or sinking there into cuppy, sheltered hollows where sheep nibble upon soft carpets of immemorial turf; while in the north the great mass of the Orme rises grimly out of the sea from its encircling fringe of foam. Looking westward across the narrows and over the wide, turf-clad, gorse-sprinkled,

sandy flats, that Nature, with rare forethought, seems to have formed here for golfers yet unborn, the steep and rugged promontory of Penmaenbach shoots finely up eight hundred feet into the sky, and, rolling back over the higher crests of Caer Lleion, drops ultimately down amongst the woods and faint smoke-wreaths of Conway town. Stretching away from the face, as it were, of Penmaenbach, the low-lying coast of Anglesey spreads itself beneath the setting sun, from the rich banks of the Menai, by Bangor, to the lonely island of Priest-home, and away and beyond again up the wild eastern coast to Point Linas and Llaneilian.

Why the sunsets over Anglesey, as we see them from this coast, should surpass any others in Wales I cannot tell, I only know that they do. Nor should I venture so much insistence on what has this long time been a secret conviction but for the authority of gentlemen in this part of the world to whom sunsets and effects appeal in a business as well as an artistic sense. It is small wonder so many artists make their head-quarters, and, indeed, live permanently, at this mouth of the Conway, seeing what infinite variety there is here of light and scene, what a wealth of detail on sea and shore, and what ready access to the best inland scenery in Wales.

If I were doomed to spend the rest of my life behind a single window, I would have that window, before all places I know of in Great Britain, on the foremost point of the dry, shingly, breezy, and above all, sunny, spit on which this new village stands. And from there I would look out over the cease-less clashing of the sea and river, not only to the heights of Penmaenbach and the ever-changing hills of Mona, but what I have as yet said nothing of, and what is, perhaps, the greatest of the many charms of Deganwy. This is the view up the estuary, to where, between the woodlands of Bodlondeb and Benarth, Conway lifts its noble castle and its hoary walls with such infinite dignity, and appeals so eloquently, not only to

those who have eyes to see, but so loudly to those also who have ears to hear the echoes from the past.

By this stretch of waterside, too, we come into touch with the sea-going side of Welsh life, which seems, in some ways, more aloof from the life of the country, as one knows it inland, than is the case in Devonshire or Cornwall, or other more or less sea-girt regions. But if Conway, in a land sense, is most distinctly a highway, as a port it is eminently a byway, and on that account, perhaps, so much the more picturesque. All sorts of quaint craft come forging through Deganwy narrows with the flood, or dropping down them with the ebb; and so close, of necessity, to the steep, shingly beach that a full-rigged barque or schooner will cast a great shadow over the window where I fain would be, and the talking of the sailors on the deck be plainly audible. This is not, however, to assume it will be understandable; for if it be not Welsh, it will quite probably be Dutch or Swedish, these industrious folk having an immemorial and consistent traffic with Conway. Beneath the lower wall of the old town, on the rude wharf and beach, where nets and boats and sails lie about in much confusion, and where the sea-going folk congregate, and mostly live, you may note over humble doors characters inscribed that the total stranger to Welsh might be apt to carelessly pass over as the mystic tongue of the country. But, as a matter of fact, they are notices in Scandinavian and Dutch for the benefit of these ancient and acceptable visitors to Conway.

There is no tourist traffic by water here, but you may, at any time, see all sorts of quaint and humble craft, up even to 500 tons, with sails of various hues, and hulls of many shapes and colours, working their way in or out, or lying in the river. Small cutters, too, or centre-boards, handled by local amateurs, will now and again come dashing out when the tide is flowing, and rush at this Deganwy channel, battling and twisting and writhing in the hands of their skilful skippers, in half-frolicsome efforts to fight

the inrushing sea, and to join their white wings in battle with the wind against the surging tide. In curious contrast to these playful butterflies of the sea are the mussel catchers, a leading feature here in local life, patiently clawing at the river bottom with their long-handled rakes, from the bows of their boats as they lie at anchor in mid-channel, a long and noiseless procession. They have been at this business—as a community I mean—ever since time was; and so have this queer group of fearsome-looking females just below our window, with large baskets on their backs, some dozen or twenty in number, cackling Welsh in raucous voices, and waiting for a capacious sailing boat that is forging towards them along the edge of the steep, gravelly shore. With their faded shawls, tattered straw hats, short petticoats, and thick legs rolled in layers of old stockings; their worn-out overcoats, clump boots, and swathes of patched cloth, they strike a spectator, particularly from an elevation,—as a collection of animated rag-bags.

My young artist friend, who, it may be remembered, was so anxious to immortalise Evan Evans among his fishing-tackle at Llangollen, thought that the first vision of these Gabalunzie ladies suggested rather a moving dust-heap, and I really think the simile so entirely admirable I must not rob her of the credit of it. They are, in truth, a tribe unto themselves, and have little enough in common with the ordinary trim and tidy Welsh peasant woman. Perhaps, however, the picture is most complete when the whole troop have waddled on board, and are packed tight around the seats of the broad-beamed boat, waiting for the sail to bulge. That, indeed, is a sight to make an artist's heart leap for joy, and one in which even a mere layman can take much delight. They are bound for the mouth of the river, where the receding tide leaves mussels high and dry upon the rocks, to be had for the picking. Once upon a time these women made more out of the pearls found in the shells than it is now possible to do out of the fish—a great deal more. For Conway pearls were, in former days, quite an item in local

trade. The great ladies of North Wales in the 16th and 17th centuries were proud to wear them on their necks and arms. The old Welsh regalia contained some, and, I rather think, among the Crown Jewels in the Tower there are one or two specimens. But the demand for mussels nowadays in Liverpool and elsewhere leaves but little opportunity for the slow development of the pearl.

The people of North Wales have not been, as a race, greatly given to going down to the sea in ships. I have no doubt, however, that the fraction who have been thus addicted have contributed their proportionate share to the maritime glories of Britain. The Welshman is of the same stock as the Cornishman and the Breton, and what he puts his hand to he, as a rule, does thoroughly in quiet, workmanlike fashion; and if he is not hardy I do not know who is.

Great as is the stretch of sea-coast in North Wales and Anglesey, I doubt if its contour was conducive to the spirit of adventure in days when that spirit was strongest. There are no deep inlets. The mountain rivers rush swiftly to the sea, and vast stretches of sand, both on the north coast and Cardigan Bay, are laid bare by every ebbing tide. There were few towns to foster rivalries or to give each other heart in great sea ventures. What few there were had mostly sprung from Anglo-Norman garrisons. The Welshman loved to live upon his farm apart, and his warlike energies had for centuries been wholly bent on fighting as a soldier in defence of his country or his province. In the great sea period of the 16th century, the traditions of soldiering must have been even still paramount in Wales. We need not go back so far as the battle of Crecy, where a third of the British army were Welshmen: or to Agincourt, where Welsh knights were greatly in evidence: or even to the desolating wars of Glyndwr. For the Wars of the Roses, at the very opening of the Tudor period, stirred the old military spirit of the Principality to its very depths, and left North Wales, as we may have cause to

notice later on, in a state of long-continued turbulence and electricity.

This is wandering somewhat, however, from the banks of the Conway and from the point. Though North Welshmen, for these and various other causes, did not go down to the sea in ships in the same strength and with anything like the same enthusiasm as Mr. Norway has so graphically shown us, the men of Western England did, thousands of hardy fishermen have been bred



Conway Bridge and Castle.

around the coast, and the Conway estuary has its share. But I do not think there is the sympathy between these sea-shore people and the farmers on the hills behind, you would find in Devonshire, or even on the East Coast. Your Conway mariner, who has ploughed the seas on Atlantic liners or East Indiamen, or braved the dangers of the Labrador and Newfoundland fisheries, feels, I think, the "inwardness" of his relatives on shore, who plough the fields. The Welsh landsman, living round the coast, is wholly a landsman. It is the mountains,

not the sea, that to him speak loudest. To them he looks for inspiration, not to waves and cliffs; and the instinct which would probably guide him safely through moorland mists, would probably be found wanting on a stormy sea.

Your Conway fisherman is, however, a Welshman to the core. He is almost sure to be a Baptist or a Calvinistic Methodist, and there is not the least likelihood of his having forgotten his mother-tongue. But he has, of course, some dash of the cosmopolitan about him, and the intense "parochialism" of his friends on shore, and the lack of interest in the outside world which certainly distinguishes the Welsh peasant, grates somewhat upon his soul, and at times he will speak his mind very freely upon the subject. Now I can well fancy that the Cornish preacher who thumps the desk of the local chapel has his veins full of sea-going blood, and could himself, perhaps, take the tiller or grasp an oar at a tightpinch; and, at any rate, his homely metaphors and illustrations must often smack of salt-water. But I cannot imagine a North Welsh minister, of the mainland at any rate, doing any of these things. He is knowing in pigs and black cattle, and well up in the price of lambs; but his creed is to make his human flock a little world unto themselves, his chapel their metropolis, with a little dissipation now and then in politics, which mean for him, and them mostly—Church Disestablishment and Disendowment. Indeed, I cannot think what Wales will do when this question is definitely settled. Nor am I surprised, when rowing up the estuary to Conway with John Jones, or out catching codlings with Hugh Evans, that they sometimes give one to understand that their experiences and travels are not appreciated as they should be by their friends of the chapel, though these latter have all their lives been accustomed to look out upon the sea.

A few fragments only remain of what was once Deganwy Castle, though in Leland's day there were still "great ruins." It was destroyed and rebuilt several times, which is no wonder, seeing that it menaced alternately both invaders and invaded.

Its site, indeed, tells its own tale to any one with the most elementary knowledge of Welsh history. It was, in short, the key to the inner line of Welsh defence. Before Edward the First built Conway and the route of travel shifted up to the ferry opposite the town, now replaced by the two bridges, the channel of Deganwy was the natural crossing-place between Snowdonia and the Perfeddwlad, the rubicon which divided the inner sanctuary of Gwynedd from the blood-stained lands between the Conway and the Dee. Again and again the tide of battle and invasion had swept so far, but since the Romans no invader had crossed it permanently. Whatever else might happen, the four lordships of Snowdon (Eryri and Arfon, Lleyn and Eivionydd), the present Carnarvonshire, in fact, held their own practically inviolate, and, holding their own, protected Anglesey, not, it is true, from interminable ravagings, but from any serious occupation. The Perfeddwlad and Merioneth, on the other hand, the former especially, were swept by incursions innumerable from end to end, though never Saxonised and never really conquered till the close of the long struggle was at hand. But before this broad shining river and the mighty hills beyond, invading hosts, with rare exceptions, shrank back, starved, beaten, or baulked; and this old castle of Deganwy was always and ever the focus of the strife.

Snowdonia is lightly dismissed by old English writers as a barren waste. As a matter of fact, there were thousands of acres of fine grazing for the hardy black cattle which constituted the wealth of North Wales, and in its far western peninsula were thousands more of fertile tillage lands, while Anglesey, since the days when the Romans, according to tradition, cut down the sacred groves, has been a fat grain-growing country. Says Giraldus, who brought his archbishop across this very ferry in the year 1188, and firmly believed the local superstition that the Conway travelled far out to sea, "preserving its stream inviolate"—"I must not pass over in silence the mountains called Eryri by the Welsh, and by the English Snowdon, or mountains

of snow, which gradually increasing from the land of the Sons of Conan, and extending themselves northward even to Deganwy, seem to rear their lofty summits to the clouds. They are said to be of so great an extent that, according to an ancient proverb, as Mona could supply corn for all Wales, so could the mountains of Eryri afford sufficient pasture for all its herds." And indeed we know well this is precisely what it often did, and that whenever time allowed before every great war the fords of the Upper Conway—for Welshmen and cattle could go where invaders could not—were churned into foam by the plunging of great herds of cattle and other stock hurrying to the Snowdon passes.

Passionately, however, as the old Welsh fought for their country, even to the banks of the Dee, there seems to have been a special sentiment about Snowdonia. The spirit of patriotism seems to have burned here its brightest and most unquenchable flame. It was a veritable citadel, a rock of defence, a refuge in time of stress. The very Princes of all Gwynedd, and of all Wales, as they sometimes were, took a special pride in their second title of Lords of Snowdon. Whatever might happen, the feeling that the four cantrefs must be held sacred and inviolate at all costs, was permanent.

Maelgwyn, a Prince of North Wales in the sixth century, erected the first castle at Deganwy. A warlike person, but whose habits of life were so loose that when the yellow plague, engendered, it is said, by the festering unburied corpses of unnumbered men slain in battle, struck this region, he shut himself up in the little church of Llanrhos standing over yonder on the next ridge, terrified at the thought of his past life. He was also unnerved by a prophecy of the Great Taliesin, which had foretold that a creature with yellow teeth, hair and eyes should come up out of the marsh to destroy him. It is said that he looked through the keyhole of the church, saw the yellow monster, and promptly expired, which is only an ambiguous method, I take it, of explaining that the first founder of Deganwy died of the plague.

Among the many invaders who encamped large armies on these pleasant sheep pastures between the castle and the river was King John, who was here twice during his wars with his son-in-law, Llewelyn the Great. On the first occasion the Welsh got behind him and cut off his supplies. His people were reduced to eating their horses, and these failing, to retire ignominiously home, the King at their head in a towering passion. On the second venture he was more successful, getting across the river and sending a detachment on to burn Bangor, which, being a cathedral town, was sufficient to incur his hatred. He also carried off the bishop, who regained his liberty however for the somewhat curious equivalent of 200 hawks.[1] It was hereabouts, too, that they brought up before the King, a Welshman caught red-handed in the murder of a priest. The trembling culprit, who no doubt fully expected to be flayed alive, must have been pleasantly surprised when, instead of this, the King patted him heartily on the back, exclaiming, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou has slain mine enemy, depart in peace."

But the most graphic picture we have of war as it was upon the banks of the Conway in olden days relates to an expedition that Henry III. made against Prince Dafydd, the son and successor of Llewelyn the Great. It was the old dispute about homage, and an element of humour, for a wonder, signalised its inception. For Dafydd, in whose breast the latest treaty with the King of England rankled sorely, sent privately to the Pope, offering to pay 500 marks if he would absolve him from his oaths. The Pope agreed, and sent instructions to his representatives among the abbots to make sure the money was all right. In the meantime, however, Henry heard of what was going on, and, chuckling in his sleeve, for his revenues were on a different scale from poor Dafydd's, sent post-haste to his Holiness, intimating, to put it vulgarly, his readiness to "go one better."

[1] The falcons of North Wales like those of Norway enjoyed the highest repute.

The Pope knocked under at once to the highest bidder, and Henry forthwith proceeded to advance against his nephew with a large army of English and Gascons. But Dafydd was too quick, and fell upon his uncle near the Marches, at the far end of that very sea-road we travelled in the last chapter, and slew all the Gascons and a great number of English knights and nobles.

The King, however, summoned the Irish to his aid, who landed in Anglesea, while he himself struggled on to Deganwy; the stock and movables of the Perfeddwlad having, as usual, been driven across the Conway. Here the Royal army remained for half the autumn; and Mathew of Paris has preserved for us a "letter from the front," written by an English knight, and describing the hardships of camp life at Deganwy—"The King with his army is encamped at Gannock [Deganwy] and is busy in fortifying that place, sufficiently strong already, about which we lay in our tents, watching, fasting, praying, and freezing. We watch for fear of the Welsh, who were used to come suddenly upon us in the night-time. We fast for want of provisions, the halfpenny loaf being now risen and advanced to fivepence. We pray that we may speedily return safe and scot-free home; and we freeze for want of winter garments, having but a thin linen shirt to keep us from the wind. There is a small arm of the sea under the castle where we lye which the tide reached, by the conveniency of which many ships bring us provision and victuals from Ireland and Chester. This arm lies betwixt us and Snowdon, where the Welsh are encamped, and is in breadth, when the tide is in, about a bow shot. Now it happened that upon the Monday before Michaelmas Day an Irish vessel came up to the mouth of the haven with provision to be sold to our camp, which, being negligently looked to by the mariners, was upon the low ebb stranded on the other side of the castle, near the Welsh. The enemy, perceiving this, descended from the mountains and laid siege to the ship, which was fast upon the

dry sands; whereupon we detached in boats three hundred men of the borders of Cheshire and Shropshire, with some archers and men-at-arms, to rescue the ship; but the Welsh upon the approach of our men withdrew themselves to their usual retirements in the rocks and woods, and were pursued for about two miles by our men afoot, who slew great numbers of them. But in their return back, our soldiers, being too covetous and greedy of plunder, among other sacrilegious and profane actions, spoiled the Abbey of Aberconway, and burnt all the books and other choice utensils belonging to it."

This was indeed one of the worst acts of iconoclasm that ever befel Wales. The great Abbey of Aberconway, founded by Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, shared with that of Ystradfflur, or Strata Florida, the honour of keeping the chronicles of the Principality, the monks of the two houses interchanging periodical visits and correcting each other's records, which were carefully kept from day to day.

"But the Welsh," our special correspondent goes on to say, "distracted [as well they may have been] at these irreligious practices, got together in great number, and in a desperate manner setting upon the English, killing great numbers and following the rest to the water-side, forced as many as could not make their escape into the boats to commit themselves to the mercy of the waves. Those they took prisoners they thought to receive for exchange; but hearing how we put some of their captive nobility to death [twenty-eight young nobles, hostages, had been executed in London], they altered their minds, and in a revengeful manner scattered their delacerated carcases along the surface of the water."

Such were the amenities of Anglo-Welsh war in the thirteenth century. The letter goes on to tell in great detail of a long struggle for the stranded ship, which contained three hundred hogsheads of wine and other provisions, which the Welsh at last captured. "And thus we lay encamped in great misery and distress for want of necessaries, exposed to great and

frequent dangers, and in great fear of the private assaults and sudden incursions of our enemies. There remained but one hogshead of wine in the whole army, a bushel of corn being sold for twenty shillings, a fed ox for three or four marks, and a hen for eightpence; so that there happened a very lamentable mortality both of man and horse, for want of necessary sustenance of life."

If there is nothing left of this famous old frontier fortress of Snowdonia but its memories and a block or two of masonry, there is little fear of the great Norman pile that rose to signalise and cement its conquest suffering in the same fashion. As you step off the bridge and pass out of the sunshine into the chill shadow of the great, pitiless-looking towers of Henry de Elfreton, the thought strikes you that they surely must have carried conviction to the most ardent patriot of the hopelessness of further resistance. They did not seem to, however, for we know that the Welsh rose again only ten years after the castle was built. It was a futile effort, and due to the first attempt at direct taxation for the French wars. Edward, as his Marchers could not suppress the rising, had to come down himself. He had already spent one Christmas at Conway, and the story goes how, on the present occasion, being cut off from his troops, who lay at Deganwy, by a big tide in the river, he was nearly starved out in his own new castle and captured by the Welsh.

But another thought may strike you, too, as you pay your bridge-toll under the frowning portals of the English gate and pass on into the little town, and this is, that Conway seems to have been not wholly unsuccessful in living up to its surroundings—no mean achievement. It has accomplished this, perhaps, in rather a negative than an active fashion, and by simply remaining an old Welsh country town, as if there were nothing to see, and no sightseers, and no tourist traffic within fifty miles. For this sublime self-possession we may thank heaven, though it may not, perhaps, have been sorely tried. People, after all, would not be greatly inclined to take up their quarters in a town

encompassed by mediæval walls and towers, when sunny watering places abounded near by, though they pass through it in thousands, eating and drinking much and merrily in its old-



Walls of Conway

fashioned hostelries. There is not much actual detail that is interesting in Conway town itself; Welsh stone and Welsh slate soon look mellow and old, and Welsh roofs and walls have a

capacity for producing abundant crops of vegetation, which pleases the fancy; the streets, too, are mostly narrow and on a slope, and always lead to a gate in the old walls, which gives them much distinction.

There is a fine old church, however, and a market-place presided over by a statue of Llewelyn the Great, who, besides having at one time re-conquered all Wales, founded the Abbey of Aberconway already mentioned. Then there is that incomparable half-feudal half-Tudor house of the Wynnes of Gwydir, Plâs Mawr, which art and antiquarian societies have made their own, and saved from all chance of decay. Its proportions, like those of the castle, require an artist's pencil to do them justice; so I will merely remark that the Cambrian Art Society holds its exhibitions here, and the public are at all times admitted for a trifling fee, and no one should pass it by. Conway, like Carnarvon, Beaumaris, and Denbigh, is practically an Edwardian town, though around Llewelyn's Cistercian Abbey a Welsh town, of a sort, existed, for a charter given to it by the same Llewelyn was recently discovered. But the real interest of Conway, like the other towns, dates from the castle, when Anglo-Norman adventurers settled down under its protection as traders with special charters from Edward, and to the exclusion of all natives. There they remained, gentlemen merchants and monopolists in a small way for generation after generation, jealously guarding their privileges of trading, ferries, and market stands; speaking English always, and living under English laws, while the Welsh outside were permitted to retain their own. "Merchants of Beaumaris," says an old Welsh saw, "lawyers of Carnarvon and gentlemen of Conway." This merely means, no doubt, that the trading aristocracy of Conway gave themselves airs, though they do not appear to have spread out into the neighbourhood like the Denbigh garrison as the founders of landed families.

But as late as the reign of Henry VII. they were jealous of Welshmen holding any place of trust in the town, and petitioned

the King to preserve them from such competition. "It is no more meate," says this precious document, "for Welshmen to bear office in Wales, especially in any of the three English towns, than it is for a Frenchman to hold office in Calais." The names, however, we find on this compact and exclusive burgess roll of Conway have long completely disappeared. This would seem to be due to no sterility on their part if one may judge from the statement on the tomb of Nicholas Hookes, in Conway church, which declares him to be the forty-first child of his father and the happy parent of twenty-seven children. These Anglo-Norman trading towns were a unique feature of old Welsh life and a rankling sore to the natives, so long as the racial distinctions were maintained. Wales smouldered on, profoundly discontented in its connection with England till its pride was soothed by supplying a King of its own blood to the throne of Britain in the person of Henry VII., and the anomalies and abuses of its government swept away by his bluff son. Edward I. had treated the conquered Welsh in statesman-like fashion for his period. He had created the four northern counties of Flint, Merioneth, Carnarvon and Anglesey, besides Cardigan and Carmarthen, where his officers administered tolerable justice to the Welsh under Welsh law and to the English under English law. But the rest of the country was left in the lamentable confusion of "Lordships," or "Honours" where each ruler, Welsh or English, did what was right in his own eyes, which generally included the cherishing of criminals and refugees from their neighbours' domains. Most people, too, will probably be surprised to hear that Wales returned no members to Parliament till the reign of Henry VIII.

Throughout this transition period of Welsh history—these two centuries of reluctant and more or less protesting union—the English towns were not only a sore, but also a great temptation to riotous chieftains when the times were rife for fighting in a small way. Fair days were of course the great gatherings of Welsh rural life, and they are no slight events

even now. But in old times every disturbance was hatched amid the steam of the heaving mass of black cattle and wild mountain sheep, which thronged the muddy market-places and choked the narrow streets. The critical nature of these occasions remained as a tradition, at any rate so late as the time of Elizabeth. For even then a proclamation was read every fair day at Conway enjoining the public to keep the King's peace, "no man to beare anie weapons or harnesse upon him under paine of sayme to be forfeited, &c."

That towns such as these should have a somewhat stirring history is only natural, and that quaint customs should survive is only to be expected. At Conway an old ceremony called the "Stocsio" obtained till the present reign, being observed at Eastertide, when on the Sunday crowds carrying wands of gorse were accustomed to proceed to a small hill outside the town known as Pen twt. There the most recently married man was deputed to read out to a bare-headed audience the singular and immemorial rules that were to prevail in the town on the following day: All men under sixty were to be in the street by six o'clock in the morning; those under forty by four, while youths of twenty or less were forbidden to go to bed at all. Houses were searched, and much rough horse-play was going about. Defaulters were carried to the stocks, and there subjected to a time-honoured and grotesque catechism, calculated to promote much ridicule. Ball-play in the castle too was a distinguishing feature of all these ancient *fête* days.

It really must be a fine thing to be Mayor of Conway; a different matter altogether from presiding at the civic board of Pedlington-in-the-Marsh or Smokeborough-on-Sea. To flaunt your robes and chains of office against such a background as the panelled walls of Plâs Mawr, and to pass in and out of your domain beneath heavy browed feudal gateways. Above all, to be Constable, as the Mayors of Conway are, of King Edward's stately pile, and do its honours to deputations of learned and distinguished bodies, who in these particulars are among the



Subject to a Catechism.

great ones of the earth. To look at the list of his predecessors in this honoured office would be certainly calculated to make the mind of an average grocer with an imagination reel to some purpose. Space presses, and I can only here pause at one of the names that if collected would make a sufficiently distinguished roll. And this is chiefly because the bearer of it is looking down upon me as I write. A full length portrait of a fine upstanding soldier-like man with brown hair and eyes, and a fresh complexion clad in a black velvet dress of the Stuart period and wearing a wide brimmed hat. It is John Williams, Archbishop of York, formerly Dean of Westminster, and Lord Keeper of the Seals. He was a Conway man, and in a sense self made; but then he was also a Williams of Cochwillon, as well as of the blood of Penrhyn (Bangor), which to a Welshman not ignorant of his country's past, will explain his influence in these parts. His period was that of the first Charles, and when the Civil War had for the time wholly dislocated church dignities and powers, he conceived that he could serve his master better in North Wales than by preaching to him at Oxford or Chester.

So, betaking him to Conway, with the King's commission as Governor, and a promise of reimbursement for his outlay, when times permitted, he proceeded to put that town and fortress in a state of defence, and out of his own private fortune to stock it with provisions and munitions of war. Furthermore, when the tide of battle began to roll towards Wales, he followed the example of Governor Salusbury at Denbigh, and invited all the people of the surrounding country to bring their valuables to Conway, and deposit them within the town and castle. The militant archbishop then took off his coat and declared himself prepared to hold the place against all comers. Things, however, began to get critical in North Wales. Chester was a seat of much activity. Powder was burning in the Vale of Clwyd and on the Marches of Montgomery. Rupert was surging through the country with troops of horse, and the Welsh Parliamentary leaders, Mytton

and Myddelton, might move on Conway at any time. Prince Rupert, it seems, did not think much of archbishops as combatants, nor did his trusty henchman, Sir John Owen of Clenenny, which is in Eivioneth beyond Snowdonia. Their thoughts took quick action, and under the Prince's commission Sir John, honest and valiant almost to eccentricity, but blunt, doubtless, and rough spoken, came to Conway, and turning the archbishop with scant ceremony out of the place he had victualled and fortified at his own expense, assumed the command. It was more than episcopal, or any other flesh and blood could stand. The ejected cleric retired to Gloddaeth, whose owner, his relative, it may be remembered, was in the service of the King. And there, in view of Conway, he fumed and raged, writing letters to the King, in which he declared that Sir John had not only turned all his (Williams') people out of the Castle, but had detained his private luxuries, not allowing the unhappy prelate so much as white wine enough to make a posset with, or even any small-beer to manufacture a caudle for his rheumatism. The King had of course trouble enough of his own on hand, and Sir John continued to sit tight. It was now, however, the year '46. All men could see the end was near, when Mytton pushing a force rapidly on from Denbigh appeared before Conway.

Now the archbishop had a great deal of property, both in the castle and town. Moreover, all his friends and neighbours, by his suggestion, had deposited their valuables there. Here, then, was a great chance to earn much popularity, to conciliate the Parliamentary party, and, above all, to pay out Sir John.

To General Mytton, therefore, went the astute cleric, and made arrangements that, if not heroic, were eminently sound and politic. In short, it was agreed that the general should preserve and respect the property of the archbishop and his Royalist friends in Conway, on condition of the latter joining him with all their forces in an attack upon the place. Sir John had no idea of yielding to Mytton's summons, so the combined forces threw

themselves on the town and carried it by storm, the archbishop heading his own party and being wounded in the assault—most certainly the last instance of an English prelate leading a storming-party. The castle itself fell soon afterwards. Mytton faithfully observed his part of the undertaking. So the local loyalists saved their valuables and got good terms, and the archbishop not only earned their gratitude, but that of the Parliament, to say nothing of the lesson administered to poor Sir John. Of this stout soldier I shall have something to say when we come to his tomb at Penmorfa and his house at Clenenny, that will, I am sure, in spite of his rough treatment of the archbishop, show him to have been the finer man of the two.

CHAPTER XI

THE VALE OF CONWAY

Now, of the three chief valleys of North Wales—for the Severn is a midway region unto itself—the Vale of Conway is, I need hardly say, the most popular among English tourists. It is more accessible from the watering places than the Dee, and tapping so readily, through its tributary valleys, the heart of Snowdonia, and itself actually washing for so great a distance the western edges of the wild Carnarvon highlands, nature is here upon a scale to which the peaceful serenity of the Vale of Clwyd makes no pretension. So far as roads are concerned we may follow up the Conway with equal comfort upon either bank. But remembering that it is thirteen miles to Llanrwst, and the river for nearly the whole distance a tideway, and only to be crossed, and that with something of a detour, at one point, it will be necessary to consider somewhat before electing which gateway in the walls of Conway to ride out of. The obvious thing to do of course would be to go one way and return another, as I have often done myself in an afternoon with an abundance of pleasure. But for us there is no such retracing of steps possible. Nor at the same time need there be the slightest hesitation under such circumstances as to which side of the valley to select. It is, moreover, fortunate that the best outlook may also be enjoyed from somewhat the best of the two roads.

We will recross the bridge then into Denbighshire, and passing the fine new station at Llandudno Junction, go circling round at best pace, in more or less company with the railroad, this broad expansion of the river that makes Conway and its hills and woods appear at high tide as if it was a lake rather than a stream on whose bosom their shadows flickered. And while thus engaged on working round to meet the water again at Llansaintffraid-Glan-Conway, I will take the opportunity of paying a tribute to, what one might almost call, the picturesque audacity of this north shore railroad, along which the Irish mail goes flaming and roaring and screaming through the stormiest days and wildest nights. Few of us, I fancy, realise what skill and patience and money it takes to fight the ocean as the North Western has to fight it for many a mile between the mouths of the Dee and Menai. The triumphs of constructive engineering such as have overcome the precipices of Penmaenmawr and Penmaenbach are patent to any one, and the raging of the waves against them is continually in evidence. But the long levels between Rhyl and Colwyn that look so uneventful to the traveller when summer seas are breaking softly on the sand and shingle, have been in fact a source of sleepless vigilance and anxious care to those who carry the financial and the moral burden of so great an artery of travel.

There are glimpses here upon this lower reach of the Conway of a kind that we shall not see again as the valley closes in upon us and excludes the beauty of distance for that of detail and foreground. For on this open sweep as we approach Glan Conway, the sky upon the west and north-west is entirely filled with the mountain peaks of the hither portion of Snowdonia. The monarch of them all it is true is hidden from these lowlands; but its most serious rival, so far as altitude may count, Carnedd Llewelyn, crowns the centre of the long procession, which begins with Moel Eilio upon the left and ends with Tal y fan upon the right. That it is given to us to see this exquisite panorama upon all occasions would be an

unpardonable insinuation. But if storm and shadow, gloom and mist delight to revel in the mountains of Carnarvon, as amid all other British highlands, what a compensation is afforded when they lift betimes, and the sunshine and the moisture of the sky and ocean play hide and seek among the hills.

Our road, however, for some four miles after this withdraws itself from the river bank and winds about in pleasant, though for a time in not too level fashion, among Denbigh farmhouses and hamlets, where little brooks go dancing downwards through the shade, and chubby children bound for school come chattering in Welsh out of country lanes and yokels, shouting at their teams in the Kymric tongue, drop down through narrow gateways, with great loads of hay, from the steep fields above. I must myself admit to never having heard a Welsh carter or drover break into English when he felt moved to address his horses with some special wealth of expletive. Indeed, I could much more readily imagine a Saxon turning to Welsh, if he knew how, in such an emergency. But perhaps the Celtic revival has banished the use of English oaths, for the excellent George Borrow, was greatly scandalised by the frightful English execrations with which a carter lad near Llansilin broke in upon his ruminations over the shade of Huw Morris.

Borrow remonstrated with the youth in the same tongue, being near the border, but was taken aback at being answered by a "dim saesneg."

"What do you mean, then," said he in Welsh, "by saying that you have no English? You were talking English just now to your horses."

"Yes," said the lad, "I have English enough for my horses, and that is all."

"But why do you want English for your horses?"

"It's no use speaking Welsh to them," said the boy. "Welsh isn't strong enough."

"Isn't Myn Diawl tolerably strong?" ventured the other.

"Not strong enough for horses," said the boy. "If I were to say Myn Diawl to my horses or even Cas András, they would laugh at me."

"What a triumph, remarks our author, for the English language, that Welsh carters are obliged to make use of it to get their horses along!" He seemed to think, however, that the triumph was hardly on its merits, and that their Welsh execrations would be quite as effective on a horse or anything else as English ones; and such an eminent philologist as Borrow ought to be a judge of this. And he goes on to tell us the origin of the Welsh oath, Cas András, tracing it to Druidical times, András or Andraste being the fury of the ancient Kymri, to whom they built temples and offered sacrifices out of fear.

But we are looking down upon the river again, and with the impetus of a mile-long hill at Eglwys bach are in a short time upon its shores.

The Conway, though still, and for sometime longer tidal, loses here all character of an estuary, and just where the banks draw nearer to each other, an imposing new bridge amid much rejoicing and celebration has been thrown recently across the channel. Here was the time-honoured ferry of Tal-y-Cafn, the only link for miles and miles between Denbighshire and Carnarvon; and where the lane leading to it leaves the roadside is the old posting house, now furbished up and flourishing with modern travel, that cheered those who went and came by it or offered them a refuge in times of stress by flood or storm. Not far beyond, too, upon the further bank, is the hamlet of Caerhun, the Conovium of the Romans—a half-way station between Bodfari, in the Vale of Clwyd, and the greater garrison of Carnarvon—and though bearing no outward traces of those distant times has furnished to the excavator many strange and curious relics of the Roman legions.

Hitherto, the road, though excellent in itself, has been unduly hilly. But now for six miles onward to Llanrwst it is

level going of the best, and not only that, but the most celebrated of Welsh valleys here begins to do justice to its reputation. The hills upon the Carnarvon side no longer shrink back as hitherto, or slope upward ridge by ridge to the distant heights beyond, but begin to press upon the river bank and with their lower ledges form a bold escarpment that rises high above the vale. For the most part this noble ridge is densely clad with foliage, though showing for a time a barer and more varied front of rock and heather, down which mountain streams fed by neighbouring lakes come leaping, and this from no mean altitude, in creamy wreaths of foam.

And yet though all that opens to our right and before us is classic ground in British landscape, we are brushing with our left shoulders the fringe of a country that almost no man knows ; always excepting, of course, the people who happen to live in it, and they are numerous enough—fifty-acre farmers, to use an old expression, and Dissenters mostly, and Welshmen to a man. This square block between the Conway and the Clwyd, the Hiraethog wilderness and the sea, not far short of twenty miles in length and breadth, is a terra incognita to the average visitor. The roads, except a good one from Abergele to Llanrwst, are indifferent and perpendicular. But the scenery in a quiet way is charming. A sea of hills, in short, that mostly reach a thousand feet, and seldom rise much more ; a labyrinth of narrow valleys, where crystal streams go prattling over verdant meads. A land where oak woods blow in much luxuriance on the lower slopes, and sweet sheep pastures share the hill-tops with breaks of golden furze ; where villages and ancient but meagrely attended churches nestle in ideal nooks, and a profoundly peaceful rural life untapped by railroads, untouched by mines or quarries, or tourists, defies the outer world, and remains, above all things, Welsh of the very Welsh.

But in gossiping thus about regions into which, though so near us, we may not venture, I have unwittingly passed by upon the roadside a not very noticeable country house, but which

represents so far as its site goes one of the greatest religious houses of mediæval Wales. This is Maenan Abbey, the successor of that great foundation of Aberconway, founded by Llewelyn the Great, of whose lamentable destruction, with all its precious records, by the English, I spoke of in a former chapter. Edward the First, who tried to make amends after his conquest for the havoc then wrought by rebuilding churches and monasteries, re-established here the Conway monks; and Edward the Second, as a boy, received upon this spot the allegiance of the Bishop of Bangor and all the local clergy. A friend who was brought up here tells me that medicinal herbs could still be found in his youth in the old Convent garden, and that a meadow is still called Cae Gwenllian, or the field of the white nun. The last abbot is said to have been not only compensated but entirely consoled for his ejection by a license to break his vow of celibacy, so I take it he must have been very much in love. It went to Wynnes at the dissolution, a different family, however, from that powerful and aquisitive one which controlled for generations, as will soon appear, most of this region. The history, in short, of the Vale of Conway for two centuries, from the town limits to the misty ridges by Penmachno and Festiniog, is the history of the Wynnes of Gwydyr.

But we are nearing Llanrwst. In the valley, which is flat and fertile and a mile perhaps in width, the grain is yellowing, and the haycocks stand thick upon the already springing aftermath. The winding river, still influenced by the tide, is as yet voiceless. The summer wind stirs briskly in a wood of ancient beech trees that for some time throws our road in shadow, and restless flocks of starlings, freshly gathered from a score of snug retreats in ivied walls and smokeless chimneys, fly hither and thither over the flat fields, as if doubtful as yet of the discretion of their leaders. Or a heron perhaps forges onwards in mid-air, its great grey wings beating with steady and effective action against the dark background of the Gwydyr woods which have now begun to clothe the opposing hills with

a rich mantle from their summit to their base. Over against them and nestling at their foot lies Trefriw. And this reminds me that a steam launch plies between this head of tide water and Deganwy every day in summer, and affords, there is no denying it, an even better prospect of the Lower Conway than the road we have just travelled.

Now Trefriw is a summer resort, and one especially dear to the hearts of Welsh dissenters—above all, to ministers. And this is not because its ancient church was founded by Llewelyn the Great to save, as 'tis said, his wife Joan, the daughter of John of England, the fatigue of mounting the steep hill to Llanrhychwyn, one of the oldest and most curious churches in Wales; nor yet because the overhanging steeps lead directly, among other beautiful spots, to Llyn Geirionydd, where Taliesin is reputed to have lived. For I cannot learn that Welsh dissenters, whose claim it is to be the patriotic party, care one jot nowadays about these things, for which at one time Welshmen had so great a passion. That a select few afford a sharp and brilliant contrast to this studied dulness, only emphasises a fact which these notable exceptions are themselves among the first to admit and deplore. Welsh history for the average Nonconformist begins with the Methodist revival, with Howell Harris, Rowlands, and Charles of Bala. Noble men beyond a doubt, who did great and noble work in the last century and later, when, thanks in the main to Anglican misgovernment, the Welsh Church was in a lamentable and parlous state. But the history of their successors is not especially inspiring. Nor are chapel statistics and sectarian rivalries the kind of interests to be absorbingly cultivated without producing a mental atmosphere that seems all ajar with the physical beauties and romantic past of Wales. "Thank God we have outgrown these superstitions," is a common retort of the Country minister to any expression of regret at this indifference. What can be said of such an attitude? unless indeed

it helps to convince us that the move for higher education in Wales has come none too soon.

All this may not seem to be very pertinent to Trefriw, except that the place is chiefly notable for its mineral waters, and that Welsh nonconformity, particularly its clergy, is greatly given to gathering round such places in seasons of relaxation. The English parson, and to some extent, his Welsh brother, takes his holiday strenuously. You will meet him on the hills, or by the riverside, or on his bicycle; but not so the Welsh preacher: as a class I mean, of course. It may seem strange that men who lead temperate, well nourished, well occupied, but not laborious lives, amid the fresh breezes of the Welsh hills, should be so fond of filling their insides from these nauseous fountains. At any rate the life around these simple centres seems to have for them some marvellous attraction; and hither, too, their deacons and their people follow them. I have never stayed at Trefriw; but of other places of a like nature in Wales I have had considerable, though involuntary experience, and at nearly all of them the preacher is greatly in evidence. The gentle toddle backwards and forwards to the wells, and the unlimited opportunities for conversation with people of his own sort and kind, all shewing him a ready deference, has its obvious attractions. Nor do these reverend habitués and their lay lieutenants ever seem to flinch for an instant, as weaker mortals do, from the draughts of sulphur or alum, that mark at stated intervals the flight of the placid hours.

One is given to regarding this kind of place as the haunt of jaded Sybarites from cities, whose livers are oppressed with burdens too great to bear and joints racked with the penalties of too great indulgence. But the simple preacher from the Welsh hills would drink one of these men under the table in the matter of sulphur or alum, and go on his way rejoicing. If any one doubts my word, let him spend a week at Llandrindod Wells, and note the feats performed there at

the Pump-rooms in the morning by Methodist and Baptist experts. But precisely why the high priests and deacons of Nonconformity, the most temperate living class of a hardy healthy race, should have such a seeming passion for these fearsome liquids passes my understanding.

But, after all, with most of the community that gather at Trefriw and such places, the water is, no doubt, a secondary consideration, and the existence led there is charac-



The Valley of the Conway.

teristic. Violent exercise and games of a robust sort are wholly against the Welsh Nonconformist tradition. And if the younger generation are now struggling to shake off the fetters, and will unquestionably do so before long, that does not alter the case. Narrow Puritanism is in the main of course accountable for this, but there is a feeling also, rather latent perhaps than expressed, that Church people do these things, and it behoves therefore a good nonconformist to so order

his ways that they shall in all things be different. A country football club is wicked in North Wales, because in Manchester some people bet on football matches. An incipient cricket club in a village with which I am intimate was quashed by the preachers on the amazing plea that it "encouraged swearing." I do not suggest for a moment that opposition to wholesome sport is always so blatant, still less always successful; but it is nearly always there, quiet and strong, in North Wales, at any rate. Each chapel would fain gather together its members for as many evenings, or holidays in the week as possible, not necessarily for religious exercises, but for indoor ones of various sorts. This in its way is admirable; but there are motives, not reprehensible, but by no means wholly spiritual, underlying it all. Combative churchmen, of course, declare this anxious shepherding of the flock to mean simply pennies, for these, naturally enough, are of vital consequence to a self-supporting congregation. But every Welshman knows well that this constant "calling of the roll," is partly due to a vague dread lest the younger people should drift into the more robust amusements of their neighbours, and thence perhaps into another point of view.

Bicycles, as a matter of fact, caused a no inconsiderable flutter in the dovecotes. Nothing can be said against their use (on a week day) even by the preachers; but, none the less, they do not love them. The very joy of their rapid movement suggests independence and even frivolity, and is out of harmony with the sombre and circumscribed traditions of the chapel. This, however, is a natural Calvinistic instinct rather than a formulated grievance, nor can anything be openly said by the most prodigious bigot. But when a young man or woman can ride fifty or sixty miles in a day, an independence of habit and observation is formed that is much more hostile to present conditions than any cricket or football matches. In the matter of discipline generally, it has already come to something approaching a struggle between the cast-iron views of the old school

and the human instincts of the younger and the new. So much I may state with entire confidence; and no one for a moment supposes that it is the young in this close of the nineteenth century that will give way, and heaven forbid that in this particular they should. But around the sulphur and the alum fountains no such forebodings enter to disturb the holy calm. The preacher and the deacon, the middle-aged and the serious, are there in too great force. A little carriage exercise, a little croquet perhaps, much gentle ambulation to the station or the wells and back, an immense amount of conversation about chapels, ministers, and disestablishment, and more continuous hand-shaking than I have ever seen, even in America, fill the quiet hours. A Welshman who knows his country as few do has recently declared that the transfer of a country preacher from one neighbouring district to another is of infinitely greater interest to the average Nonconformist than an important change in the Cabinet. This is, I think, the very worst that can be said of Welshmen, that is to say of the class who more particularly claim for themselves the title of "good Welshmen," this pettiness of interest and lack of pride in Imperial concerns, in which the best men of the Principality have always taken, and still take, their part. And for such an attitude Nonconformity is beyond a doubt responsible.

Llanrwst is a typical old-fashioned Welsh town of some 3,000 souls, contained for the most part in a single long street, which terminates in an old and picturesque market-place. Its tone from end to end is grey of varying shades, and on market or fair days it is alive with hill farmers, and crowded with traps and carts. The tourist comes and goes in the holiday season, though as a passer by rather than a sojourner, by thousands. But it is strange, after all, what little effect the stream of Saxon travel has, upon Welsh life in general. Llanrwst was formerly the great wool market of Wales, its prices ruling over the whole country from Pwllheli to Llangollen. Once upon a time, too, it was famous for its harps. And how old

it is may be gathered from the statement in the Gwydir Chronicle that grass grew in its streets after the desolation of the Glyndwr wars and the deer grazed through them.

But the old church lying back from the narrow high street upon the river bank is, to my thinking, the charm of Llanrwst, always excepting that is to say, the beauty of its general environment. I don't know that one can feel a lively interest in the fact that it was dedicated to a British saint named Gwrst, or flourished, like most Welsh saints, in the sixth century, for the best authorities are now agreed that the sanctity of many of these gentlemen did not necessarily amount to very much. But the tradition that the land was given by Rhun ap Nefydd Hardd, in atonement for his notable murder of Idwal, the son of Owen Gwynedd, in that most gloomy and terrible of all Welsh tarns that bears his name, should strike a more tragic and realistic note. This, however, has little to do with the attractions of the present church, which, like so many others, was built when Wales made a fresh start in the reign of the first of its own Tudors, Henry of Richmond, nor yet with the green churchyard so thick with hoary tombstones, washed upon one side by the now bright and sounding streams of the Conway, and shut out from the rattle of the town upon the other by old houses and charming bits of foliage. Many a hill farmer and many a squire of small estate and prodigious pedigree, but of family now fallen or extinct, lie here in this green lot beside the Conway. Jones and Williams, Lloyds and Hughes by the score, with the record of their undistinguished identities carved, in the Kymric tongue for the most part, above their dust. But the feature of Llanrwst church is the Gwydir chapel, where mightier dead repose. For this beautiful annex was built out upon the south side of the chancel in 1633 by the Wynnes, once owners of Gwydir house, over yonder at the foot of the hill across the river, of whom I have already said a passing word, and shall have to say many more.

This mortuary chapel, which Inigo Jones seems really to have

designed, is isolated from the chancel, a door being cut through the wall. It is nearly square in shape, and perhaps some thirty feet in length, and filled with tombs, mural monuments, and brasses of this potent, and, though no longer in possession of Gwydyr, still virile race. To touch upon the fantastic and sometimes beautiful work that is here, or catalogue the worthy courtiers and renowned warriors that it commemorates, is impossible and unnecessary. But here among the wild Welsh mountains, with the rush of a salmon river sounding through the open door, there seems somehow a stronger flavour of a romance about these dead and gone lords and ladies, and chieftains of the Vale of Conway, than belongs to the tombs of the great in a homely English churchyard.

But there is something here, resting upon the stone floor, that should awaken livelier emotions than the names of any mere country barons, whether Welsh or English, and this is the stone coffin of no less a person than Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, or the Great. It was brought from the original tomb at Aberconway to Maenan Abbey, when the whole establishment was moved under Edward I., and from Maenan hither at the dissolution, or soon after. Much indeed, of the interest of Llanrwst church lies in the woodwork and other treasures that were conveyed hither from the royal and ancient house. A recumbent effigy in full armour of Howel Coetmor, a noted soldier in his day, and lord of the valley before the advent of the Wynnes, seems to strike an earlier note, and tell of another epoch from that of the Tudor and Jacobean monuments that lie around and beneath it. For he led, we are told, a hundred men of Denbigh to the field of Poitiers, and fought there valiantly, falling afterwards in Flanders.

Gwydyr Castle is close by and all upon our route, which passing out of the town crosses the river by one of the many famous bridges of North Wales. The merit of this one might well lie in the complete charm of its situation, and the buoyant transparency of the broad river, which rushes through its arches.

But it chooses rather to urge a doubtful claim to Inigo Jones, who was a doubtful native of Llanrwst, as its designer, and to vaunt a singular capacity for shaking when struck smartly on the parapet above its centre. There is generally a loafer about who, for the price of a pint of beer, is only too anxious and willing to convince the sceptical upon this point. The last performer whom I witnessed banging his back against the wall in the interests of truth and science was, I was assured, the remains of an Oxford M.A., who was reduced to this means of satisfying an unquenchable thirst. Pennant says, when he was



The Bridge at Llanrwst.

here in 1780, that the river was all alive with coracles catching salmon. The coracles are seldom now in evidence; but those salmon who escape the nets below run up in early autumn floods, and the glint of a salmon rod may be seen waving above almost every pool at such propitious periods.

It is a brief and shady walk along the Bettws road to Gwydir. The portal of the old mansion opens on to the highway; and, indeed, unless you caught sight of the date above it, 1555, with the initials T. W., you might well pass it by unnoticed for all that can be seen of the glories within. It would be wholly irrelevant to relate how Gwydyr passed from the Wynnes through

a female line to the Dukes of Ancaster, and by the same fashion through the Willoughbys to the present owner, Lord Carrington. Our business is with the Wynnes who were Welshmen, and reigned here in strange and turbulent times and have left us invaluable records of them.

This famous family first came into the valley in Henry the Seventh's time, purchasing Dolwyddelan Castle, where we shall shortly be, and later on acquiring Gwydyr from the Coetmores of Poitiers fame. Meredydd ap Evan was the original migrant, head of a famous stock in Eivioneth beyond the Snowdon mountains and a direct descendant of the royal Llewelyns. His friends marvelled greatly that he should leave the sociable levels of his own country in west Carnarvon and come to a wild valley, which the desolation of two fearful wars, those of Glyndwr and of the Roses, had handed over to brigands and refugees from justice. But the social advantages of Eivioneth at that time took the form of most ferocious feuds between the leading families, of which I shall have something to say when we get there, after passing through the mountains. The famous Sir John Wynne, the historian of the Gwydyr family and grandson of the first settler, tells us that his grandfather, in answer to these remonstrances, replied that he should find elbow room in that vast country; and that he would rather fight with outlaws and thieves than with his own blood and kindred, for if he lived in his own house in Eivioneth he must either kill his own kinsmen or be killed by them.

Gwydir does not as is sometimes stated mean the land of blood. Two great battles nevertheless were fought here, the first in the seventh century by Llywarch Hên, the poet warrior; the second, after the death of the great law maker, Howel Dda, when North and South Wales met in fierce combat, to the worsting of the latter.

Not a great deal of the original Wynn mansion of 1555 is left, but it is still a beautiful and ancient house, full of carved oak, and tapestry and Spanish leather and treasures and relics of great people innumerable. It is only occupied

by the present owner for short periods, and can at other times be inspected—a favour which no one who cares for such things should fail to take advantage of, or, I may add, appreciate.

Leicester stayed here, so did Queen Elizabeth and Charles I. But I have left myself no space to dwell upon the interior of this charming old Tudor mansion, overhung on one side in such romantic fashion by the "Crag of the falcon," and washed so pleasantly upon the other by the bright streams of the Conway; for if I did Sir John Wynn would have to go to the wall, and he seems to me much the most important person connected with Gwydyr from our present point of view, both on account of his invaluable chronicle and his own personality.

Sir John was M.P. for Carnarvonshire and a justice of the Court of the Marches. But in spite of all this and the obligation under which he has laid posterity, local tradition has it that he was something of a tyrant, and local superstition has doomed his spirit to dwell beneath the thunder of the Swallow falls, the Rhaiadr y Wenol, near Bettws-y-Coed, there, as Yorke says, "to be purged, punished, spouted upon and purified from the foul deeds done in his days of nature." He built a second house in the woods above, the chapel of which still stands, and is known as Gwydyr Ucha. But Sir John's mind was not only greatly concerned with the doings of his forbears, but quite as much so for the improvement of the country. It vexed him beyond measure that his relative, Sir John Myddelton, should be spending his energy, brains, and fortune on supplying London with water, when his own country so badly needed capital and enterprise. The great reclamation works done by Mr. Maddox early in this century at Portmadoc seems to have urgently commended themselves to the prescient eye of Sir John nearly two centuries before. "I may say to you," he wrote to Myddleton, "as the Jews said to Christ, we have heard of thy great works done abroad, (alluding to the New River and other projects); doe somewhat in thine own country." He begs Myddleton to come and stay with him to their mutual ad-

vantage, and see the great mining and other possibilities that there are in Carnarvonshire.

His reminiscences, however, are what most interest us, and I shall have more to say of them presently when we come to Eivioneth, a district they much concern. He tells us of the desolating and historic march of the Earl of Pembroke and his brother Herbert to Harlech—when the most stirring national air perhaps in Europe is said to have been written—and he himself bursts into less stately but informing verse for which we are grateful—

> "In Harddlech and Dinbech every house
> Was basely set on fire,
> But poor Nant Conway suffered more,
> For there the flames burnt higher
> 'Twas in the year of our Lord
> Fourteen hundred and sixty-eight,
> That these unhappy towns of Wales
> Met with such wretched fate."

He declares moreover that the stones of the ruins on his own demesne still carried, even in his time, the marks of fire. Like all Welshmen, Sir John was greatly interested in genealogy, and the small gentry that lived outside his property interested him much. "Conferring oft with them," he found "they held their lands, and were descended mostly from Ednyfed Vychan." And this was the illustrious warrior who has enabled so many Welsh families to this day to carry on their quarterings, the "Pen Sais," or three Englishmen's heads so familiar in Welsh heraldry. He was a famous captain of the great Llewelyn's, and upon one occasion, in a battle on the north coast, laid the bleeding heads of three English knights, all slain by his own hand, at his master's feet, and earned that strange device for himself and his descendants, borne even to this day. Indeed, the Tudors, if I remember rightly, carried it. Sir John laments the hundred years hiatus in Welsh history, between the reigns of Edward I. and Henry IV., due, he declares, to the ruthless

harrying of the bards. If any one, too, should feel curious as to the names bestowed on Welsh noble ladies in the middle ages, here are some from the records of his family—Leuki, Angharad, Trawst, Esylht, Marged, Tanwystle, Gwerville, Gwenhwyfa, Myfanwy, and Marsli. Bearing in mind the craving for early English names that has for a generation possessed the mothers of Kensington and the suburbs, this partial list of Sir John's lady relatives might open out new possibilities to some adventurous young matron. The Welsh gentry had just begun in Sir John's time, which was that of Elizabeth, to speak English as their common tongue, and to exhibit that contempt for their native language, which I might add most people think nowadays has been a little overdone.

Sir John, however, like his ancestors in Eivionetli, was not, it seems, without family quarrels, though manners had indeed greatly mended. For he tells us of an uncle, living close by, who "had a hay road through Gwydir from Trefriew," and evidently abused his right, for so great had grown the friction that Sir John had quite decided "that lives must be lost." Ellis Cadwallader, of Ystymllyn, however, interposed, and the knight of Gwydir was smoothed down and "bridled his choler." He died in 1626, but had lived long enough to see his son Richard groom of the bedchamber to the incoming king, whom he had indeed accompanied with Buckingham on his princely but bootless jaunt to Spain. And Sir T. Bulkelly, on his first sight of Gwydir, writes to this same Richard Wynn in London that even for such honours as he has at court it is surprising that he can tear himself away from so fair a place.

But we, at any rate, must tear ourselves away from it, and I must leave untold a store of curious things about the place and neighbourhood, gleaned not only from Sir John's quaint pages, but from good friends in the locality whose interest in the past of Wales does not begin, like that of some other Welshmen, at Howel Harris or Charles of Bala.

It is but three miles to Bettws-y-Coed, by a level shady

road hugging the wooded steeps, at whose summit the Carreg y Gwalch, or "the rock of the falcon," towers above the vale. "The noblest oaks in all Wales," says Pennant, "grew here within man's memory." And here in a cave still called by his name lurked David ap Shenkin, a famous robber chieftain, and partisan of the house of Lancaster, when driven to bay. But for years during the wars of the Roses "little David" contended for the supremacy of the valley with another chief of outlaws, Howel



In the Lledr Valley from Bettws-y-Coed.

ap Gethin, of Dolwyddelan, whither we are bound. David, getting the worst of it, sped to Ireland, and brought back a company of stalwart fellows whom he dressed in green; and the country people, thinking they were fairies, held him in more dread than ever. And so he flourished greatly as half outlaw, half Lancastrian, till the Herberts' desolating march through the Conway valley swept out of it every living thing, David ap Shenkin and his green men included.

I shall leave Bettws-y-Coed for the next chapter, seeing we have to come back and make our start from there, and push onward through its leafy highways, and beside its glancing waters, till beneath a great dividing hill we meet the parting of the ways, the Conway leading to the left, the Lledr to the right. I shall take the latter, not because the railway which hides itself so admirably that I had really forgotten all about it, does so, but because Dolwyddelan Castle lies that way, and also because the Lledr has been more celebrated by the artist's brush than any one mountain stream probably in Britain.

A sylvan scene like this one where the two rivers meet is not of the sort that generally suggests the dark art of witchcraft to the mind. But, nevertheless, in or about the reign of William III., Mr. Elias Owen says that a house of entertainment stood near here, and, indeed, it may be one of those standing yet, kept by two sisters, young women, too, and of well favoured mien, of whom eerie things were said. The money and valuables of passing lodgers, it was whispered, disappeared during the night in such unaccountable and singular fashion that there was no possibility of bringing the matter home to the culprits in the ordinary manner. But at length it so fell out that an officer, home on leave, stopped here one night on his way from Corwen to Conway, and though he could swear no one entered his room in the night, certain coins had unquestionably disappeared from the pocket of his clothes, which he had placed by his bedside on a chair. The doughty warrior determined to solve the problem, and on his way home put up at the same house, and set himself to watch all night with his naked sword ready to hand. Nor was he unrewarded, for in the dusky hours of the morning he heard a faint but curious scratching sound, and jumping up forthwith in bed he saw in the gloom a large black cat pawing stealthily at his breeches with one foot extended. Leaping out of bed and seizing his sword at the same moment, he made a rapid cut at the animal, which, uttering a fearful shriek, rushed from the

room. The soldier returned to a sleepless bed in a cold sweat, and filled with a horrid suspicion. The morning brought courage, but had not altered his views, which were strengthened when one only of the sisters appeared at breakfast time. On inquiring for the other, he was told she was indisposed. The guest, however, was determined to solve the mystery, and, when he had paid his bill, he declared that he would not leave the house until the girl herself came down and bid him good-bye. This she at length, with great and evident reluctance, consented to do, but



In the Valley of the Lledr.

even then offered the soldier her left hand, excusing herself on the plea that she had injured her right, which she endeavoured to conceal, though not successfully enough to prevent the sharp eyes of the other from noting that the wrist was bound round with a black silk bandage. This was proof enough for the gallant officer of the character of his entertainers and for the neighbourhood also, who soon made the place too hot to hold such limbs of Satan.

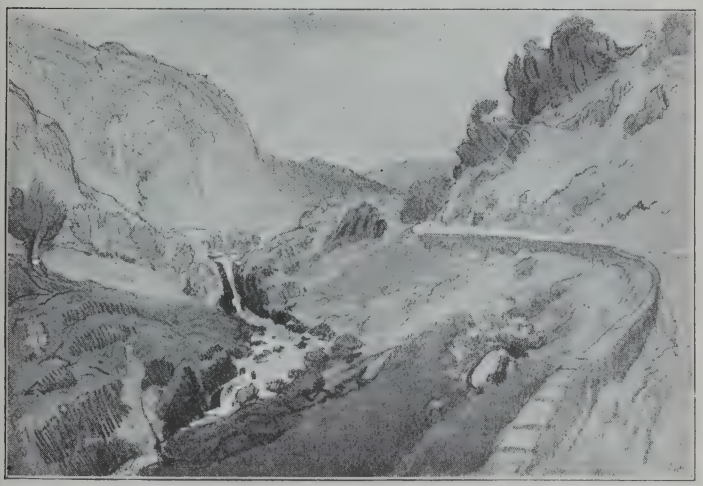
The valley of the Lledr, from its mouth to its fountain head

in the wild pass that looks down upon the great quarrying village of Festiniog, is a long succession of enchanting scenes. The road for riding on is perfect, and for much of the time looks down on the river far below, fighting its foaming way through rocks and boulders, that even for a mountain stream are of amazing size and ruggedness. The peculiar Welsh blend of luxuriant tender verdure with the extreme of rugged boldness, is here present in an infinite degree. Deep heather and beetling cliffs, silent pine woods and rich lowland foliage, distant mountains and sweeps of bracken-sprinkled hillsides, make an exquisite picture with such a volume of white water as goes tumbling through its midst. At Pont-y-Pant, the road drops again to the river, where, with immense commotion, the latter goes roaring through a rocky gorge; and here, too, a curious old bridge spans the current that may just possibly have had a predecessor in the time of the Romans. For a Roman road, Sarn Helen (Sarn-y-Lleng, "the causeway of the legion"), that crosses North Wales to Carnarvon, almost touches the river at this point.

In a quieter stretch where the hills are higher, but the valley wider and more habitable, stands the village of Dolwyddelan (Dolwithèlan). It is a small community of quarrymen and not over sightly, but its old disused church, for primitive antiquity and its diminutive interior, is worth a visit, to say nothing of its connection with the lawless period of this romantic district.

Two miles above, where the Lledr valley begins to strike a wilder and more solemn note, stands in much pride of place upon the foot of Moel Siabod the lonely embattled tower of Dolyddelan. This was no Norman keep but, like Deganwy, an ancient Welsh fortress. For, as the latter guarded the northern marches of Snowdonia and the mouth of the Conway, so Dolyddelan guarded its southern approaches and watched the sources of the streams. It touches the same chords within us as does Dinas Bran. But Dinas Bran, weird and imposing as in itself it is, looks out over a scene palpitating with life and

beauty and richness, and steeped in memories. Dolwyddelan, too, stands high up and alone and far above such little life as there is here. But the charm of its outlook is in its wildness and solitude. The history of the English marches is by comparison full and luminous. The sort of deeds however that were done in these wild glens on the marches of Snowdonia we can only gather just enough of by scrappy records and dim traditions to set the fancy going.



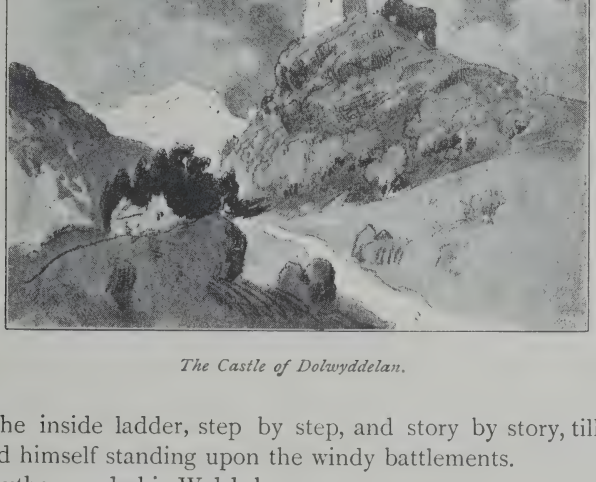
Near Dolwyddelan.

It is a steep scramble from the roadway up to the rocky grass-grown ledge upon which the grim turreted keep of Dolwyddelan stands out so boldly. Candour, however, compels the admission that much, though careful, restoration was done here in the last century. It would indeed be almost too much to expect of a place which has given birth to Welsh kings and been the seat of robber

chieftains, that it should retain a form so astoundingly suggestive as this one still does, without some assistance and support. It would be enough honour for any Welsh castle to say that Llewelyn the Great had been born there, and this honour almost certainly belongs to Dolwyddelan, seeing that it was his father's home. For the latter, though the eldest son of Owen Gwynedd, had been disinherited in favour of his brother on account of his personal appearance, which was disfigured by a broken nose, so fastidious were these old Welshmen in the matter of their rulers. It seems also to have been the last post to hold out against Edward I. a hundred years later. Before the magnificence of the Edwardian castles, Dolwyddelan shrank by the time of the Wars of the Roses to be a robbers' stronghold, where that great bandit, Howel ap Evan ap Rhys Gethin, disputed, as we have seen the lawless sway of the country with David ap Shenkin and his green and merry men. But when the ancestors of Sir John Wynn came there all was changed. He civilised the region and established colonies of men selected for their physique, and kept a bodyguard, his grandson tells us, of seven score stalwart fellows, "each one armyed in a jacket or armolate coat, a good steele cap, a short sword and dagger together with bowe and arrows; many of them also had horses and chasing staves which were ready to answer the crie on all occasions." This same Meredith (or Meredydd) built afterwards a house a mile away, at Penmaenan, on the choicest ground in the valley. But if it had not been for his bodyguard he would have been a prisoner in it according to his son's account.—For Sir John, "questioning his uncle," learns that he could not go to church on Sunday without an armed company of twenty men, leaving a sufficient guard in charge of his house in the meantime, and a watchman at all seasons posted upon a high rock called Carreg y big, to give timely notice of the approach of his many lawless foes. They were at length compelled to move the church out of a thicket on to plain ground owing to the designs of their enemies, and, even guarded as they were, "durst not go and

come by the same road lest they should be layed for." But the energy of this public spirited person triumphed in due course, and he left the land almost peaceful when, in 1525, he died, the father of twenty-three children, the eldest of whom, as we know, built Gwydir.

If any one who has a fancy for such emotions would woo to full perfection the spirit of solitude, he could not possibly do better than go alone upon a visit to this grim tower, and climb



The Castle of Dolwyddelan.

up the inside ladder, step by step, and story by story, till he found himself standing upon the windy battlements.

Southey made his Welsh hero

> "Linger gazing as the eve grew dim
> From Dolwyddelan's tower."

But to fully enter into the spirit of the place I would go there, as I have more than once done, when storm clouds are whirling by in mad career, and torrents are raging down the hills and moors, and mountains are breaking out in huge mys-

terious masses and vanishing again as quickly in the gloom and mist. For we are on the very slope here of Moel Siabod ; its heather and bog grasses clamber almost into the castle yard, and its rugged summit rears itself for over two thousand feet immediately above our heads. In the valley far below, little trace remains of its former luxuriance. The strip of meadow through which the Lledr sings, is trenched upon by a wild confusion of heathery and bushy knolls, and pressed in close beneath the feet of steep, green mountains, beyond which the infant Conway plunges down the valley of Penmachno from the lakes and springs which give it birth. Away up the pass the road to Blaenau Festiniog goes winding on and upwards for many miles, amid a broken sea of tumbling moorland—a wide stretching wilderness of heather that in early autumn makes a brave and noble show—while underneath a great part of it the railroad, flinching from the long ascent, burrows its subterraneous way through one of the longest tunnels in all Britain.

CHAPTER XII.

BETTWS-Y-COED TO BANGOR.

Bettws-y-Coed is, I suppose, the most famous mountain village in Wales. It has harboured in its time beyond a doubt, more artists, and been more painted by them than it would be possible in these days of general and facile travel for any single place to pretend to. Touring in Wales is, indeed, a much older business than people are sometimes apt to suppose. Pennant (1770–1786) travelled on horseback as a Welsh gentleman deeply versed in the lore of his country, and with an eye to local industry and agriculture. Appreciative, and even enthusiastic as he sometimes is, regarding the scenery, the adjectives of the Flintshire squire, when face to face with the more awesome features of Snowdonia, still smack a little even yet of the older school. "Horrible" and "dreadful" trip readily on such occasions to his tongue, though no doubt he was in this matter nearly emancipated, and the shudder they suggest by no means implies the positive aversion with which his father, and certainly his grandfather would have turned from the prospect. "A horrid spot of hills," for instance, is Halley's brief verdict on North Wales after a journey to Snowdon in 1698.

But in the first ten years of this century quite a budget of exhaustive books on North Wales from a traveller's point of view appeared, including one regular and comprehensive guide for tourists. So Bettws may be said for a century to have

been more or less exploited by the British public; and, remembering this, and how handy it lies to all the best Snowdonian scenery, and, recalling also, what other places of similar fame in this, and other lands, have become, one enters the place with relief and thankfulness that it is still a bower of foliage beneath which two bright and rushing rivers, the Llugwy and the Conway, mingle their waters. There are four or five hotels it is true, but with woods behind and trees before them, they are almost inoffensive, while a single street of stone cottages, that have been for so long given up to the business of entertainment that with the aid of art and nature and a quite respectable antiquity, they are really anything but unattractive, completes the havoc of civilisation. Then, again, the Holyhead road, bringing the Irish mail, came through here. We left it at Corwen, and now have another thirty miles or so upon this famous causeway of Telford's, though in this part of Wales where roads generally are so good the advantage is less noticeable.

Perhaps it was the passing stream of such travel that first opened out Bettws. In Pennant's time there was practically nothing but the old church, and I would always spare a few minutes for this, if only that a recumbent effigy in full armour, lies here over the tomb of a man who takes one back at a jump, from postchaises and periwigs to the heroic age of Wales. This is no less a person than Griffith ap Dafydd Goch, the grandson of that ill-fated Prince Dafydd who died with his brother Llewellyn in the last struggle for Wales under the executioner and torturer at Shrewsbury, and for whose right shoulder, as a trophy to be hung over their gates, the cities of Winchester and York fell to quarrelling with a heat that was, in itself, no mean eulogy to his prowess. Upon this, his grandson's tomb, is graven a now scarcely legible inscription, whose very brevity, seeing the age it speaks from, seems to touch one.

"Hic jacet Gruffydd ap Dafydd Gôch
Agnus Dei, miserere mei."



Pont Cyfyng (Narrow Bridge) near Capel Curig.

Bettws, there is no denying it, is not precisely the spot you would select in August for a quiet retreat, though it is quiet enough and practically unspoiled for nearly ten months in the year. I like to fancy it, however, as it was before the days of bicycles and railroads, in the early part of the century, when the Irish mail dropped down here from the bleak uplands of Cerig y-Druidion and Pentre Voelas, and prepared to face the wintry horrors of Nant Francon pass; when fox-



Entrance to the Fairy Glen.

hunting squires came hither, honeymooning in their own carriages, with post horses from peaceful English country homes in the Midlands or the East, to look with simple wonder at the turmoil of a mountain river, and see a trout rise and a salmon leap, for the first time most likely in their lives. How often, too, tucked away on the walls of back bedrooms or dark stairways in all parts of England does one come on souvenirs, if not actually of such trips, at any rate of this remote period

of Welsh travel: quaint fly-specked woodcuts of Bettws or Beddgelert, with gentlemen in regency coats and high beaver hats, angling for salmon with implements like ships' masts, and ladies, decked out in the full fashion of a bygone age, posing on the bank. I like to think of Bettws, too, a little later, when David Cox and all his following of painters made the Royal



Glen near Bettws.

Oak their headquarters, and with the anglers that foregathered there made a rare good fellowship, which went on from season to season, undisturbed by any thought of Norway salmon, or of the mountains of the moon, or by the output of bank holidays, or the rumble of the char-a-banc.

But we have got to reach Bangor in this chapter and that is

twenty miles away—the first eight of which are a steady up-grade, though so gradual, thanks once more to our old friend Telford, that there is scarcely any point up which our machines will not carry us without undue exertion. I will refrain from any attempt to describe in detail that well known six miles between Bettws and the scarcely less familiar haunt of Capel Curig. The Llugwy, not much less tumultuous and little less beautiful than the Lledr, swings from side to side of the ever charming valley which our winding road so tortuously and easily ascends. We may pause for a moment to look over the sounding chasm into which the Rhaiadr y Wenol, "the falls of the Swallow," leap with a mighty uproar and give a passing thought to the tortured spirit of poor Sir John Wynn serving its long purgatory amid the foaming whirlpool. Or we may call to mind the bard Taliesin, whose reputed home was on the banks of Lake Geirionydd, that lies up behind the wooded heights upon our right—the greatest after Merlin of that memorable quartett which sprang from the Arthurian period. Everywhere upon either side, are verdant woods and glancing waters, emerald meadows with the scent of the half-carried hay blowing sweetly from them, and mighty mountains, looking twice their height, as they generally do look in our island clime, rising up into a summer sky.

Siabod with its giant shoulders and rocky crown fills all our world upon the left, a blaze of colour from where its fertile feet catch the spray of the Llugwy to its rugged crest so sharply cut against the blue of heaven. Ahead of us and to the right the monarchs of Snowdonia, some nearer and some still far away, forge one after another into view, showing yet no wealth of detail like the neighbouring Siabod, but a mass of greys and greens touched lightly with the faint shadows of light summer clouds. The great twin brothers Llewelyn and Dafyd are there pushing above a pile of lower heights their rounded humps, and there, too, are the wild Glydyrs' sterner crests. And as we

come in sight of Capel Curig, the many peaks of Snowdon, the Wyddfa crowned as it so often is, alone among its satellites even upon the clearest days, with a wreath of fleecy cloud,



Swallow Falls.

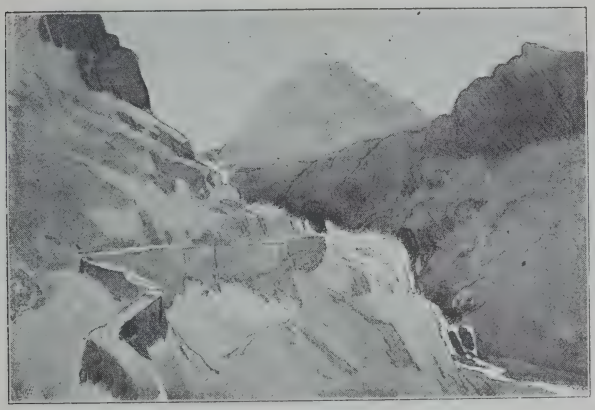
break finely across the western sky. Some scattered cottages, an ancient little church, and a big hotel looking down upon two sparkling lakes and up a bare green valley towards Snowdon

is all that there is of the far famed village of Capel Curig. And the big hotel must not be contemptuously brushed aside as a mere excrescence of modern travel. For in an old engraving that lies before me bearing the date of nearly a century ago, it stands out as large to all seeming as it is to-day. It may even be that Sir Watkin Wynn and his "Ancient Brittons," caroused there on their way to Ireland in '98, for this route was then newly opened.

But a few hundred yards short of it, both the Holyhead road, and the now slender Llugwy, and ourselves with them being bound for Nant Ffrancon, turn sharply away to the right, and leaving behind all lowland verdure go bowling smoothly over gentle inclines through a noble wilderness indeed. One finds it hard sometimes to believe in those oak forests, that even so late as Leland's day, not only filled the valleys of Snowdonia, but unless all old writers are to be ignored, spread far up the mountain sides and waved in rich luxuriance where grouse now fly over miles of heather and hardy sheep nibble over miles of turf. You may see fragments yet in plenty, on the edges of the low country and by the Traeths of these old Welsh woods, and may halt a dozen times in a day's ride to admire the sun and shadow playing through the gnarled mossy trunks of some such primæval grove and flickering on the green grass that has light and air and room to flourish under them. A very different kind of woodland is this from that which one knows to be beautiful, but is apt to forget has at some time or other been planted by the hand of man. So there is no doubt that the thousands of cattle which in times of danger and invasion found food and safety in the bosom of these mighty mountains found also, in stormy weather a natural shelter that has been wholly swept away. And as nowadays one courses easily by coach or cycle through the heart of a country into which the boldest English warriors durst not then venture, and is inclined, with some justice and making all allowances for the age, to marvel at the dread which it inspired, the memory of

these oak forests, will I think go far to help one to grasp the situation.

Here for instance, in this wild valley by which we are so comfortably climbing to the gateway of Nant Ffrancon and the sources of the Ogwen, not a tree or bush worth mentioning is now visible upon the whole wide horizon. It is difficult indeed to fancy timber ever having grown here, or to believe that the long mountain slopes which roll upwards to many a hidden lake upon our



The Pass of Nant Ffrancon.

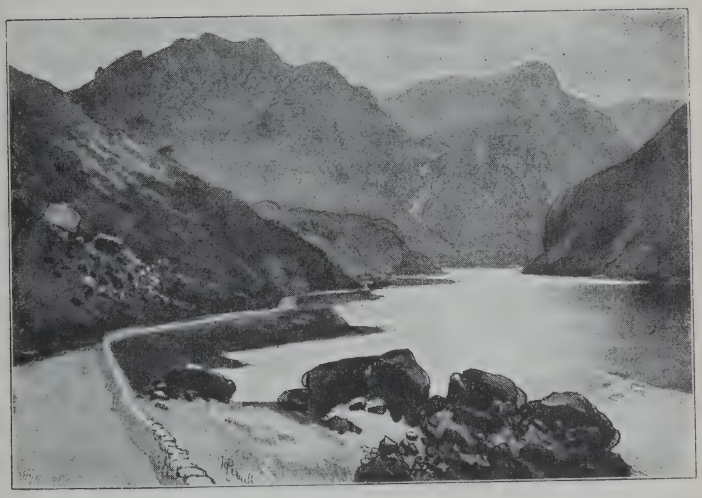
right, or spring more precipitously on the left, towards the Snowdon group could ever have carried anything but the heather and the sweet turf, the bog grasses and the moorland sedges and the wild boulders and the bracken that to my thinking, at any rate, are more beautiful as a prospect than a whole world of oaken leaves. It has been given to me to live year in and year out, for a long period under mountains higher than Snowdon, covered from their summit to their base with as rich and varied a foliage as the world can show. And though as I think of

the fiery splendour that lit them in autumn, and again the infinite freshness that swept over them in May, I feel for a moment shaken. I would not in truth give the colouring and the shadows that dapple our wild British hills for all the foliage that ever spread heavenwards to meet the cloudless blue of alien skies.

If there is any bit of Wales that could justify the awestruck shudders of the old horseback tourists, it is surely this head of the pass of Nant Ffrancon, into whose shadows we are so rapidly drawing. For Tryfan is now hanging right above us, a pile of escarped cliffs and fragmentary boulders lifting up a pointed crown, upon which there is, in fact, not too much standing room, to a height of three thousand feet. The back of the Glydyrs, higher still, sweep round behind it one vast chaotic upheaval of volcanic rocks from the very roadway we are travelling to the jagged sky-line. I do not know that doubling the altitude would add anything to the sublimity of the scene, for 3,000 feet is for every practical purpose as good as six, when wrought into such fearful shapes as this. But certainly in no other way could nature be improved upon for pure ferocity. For rocks as big sometimes as haystacks lie over every acre of slope, and gorge, and hollow, piled upon one another, in fantastic fashion or strewn around in a wild abandonment more eloquent of those great primeval convulsions we talk about so glibly than anything I have ever beheld within these seas. Nor does this grim back of Tryfan and the Glydyrs look less savage because the sunshine so rarely lights it, lying as it for the most part does lie, towards the north. Nor yet is there any lake of note in Wales more deeply shaded than the cold waters of Llyn Ogwen, which for nearly a mile, fill the narrow gorge between these frowning precipices and the less savage but no less steep and lofty ridges of Craig Ddu. Here too, if anything were wanting to lend further glamour to a scene so solemn, sings Taliesin, " are the tombs of

the warriors of the Isle of Britain." "The grave of the son of Offram after many conflicts is in Camlan—the grave of Bedwyr is in the ascent of Tryfan,"

> "On Glydyr's height behold the grave
> Of Ebbediw, that hero brave,
> Whose matchless prowess clad in steel,
> Oft made the foe his vengeance feel."



Llyn Ogwen.

How Pennant and his friends got through here I do not know, except in so far that he informs us it was "*the most dreadful horse-path in Wales.*" But Telford has cut our road beneath the shadow of the Northern bank, the cold lake dimpled with rising trout beneath us upon one hand, and the overhanging mountains, looking as if at any moment they might topple down and crush us, on the other. A strange place surely for the highway between London and Dublin to have passed through. What a world of wonders such an expedition must have opened

to honest burghers who had never in their lives seen anything bigger than Hampstead Heath or Epsom Downs! At the foot of the lake the narrow gorge abruptly terminates, and the outflowing river, just beneath where we cross it, plunges with great tumult into the deep vale beyond, and we see Nant Ffrancon glimmering below us and spreading away towards the low country, and Bangor, and the sea. The road along the mountain side is finely graded, and the Ogwen winds through green and meadowy flats below. Above us, though hidden from view, Carnedd Dafyd, within a hundred feet of Snowdon's height, lifts its humpy back. Across the valley a chain of peaks, less lofty, but infinitely grander, precede us on our road to the famous Penrhyn quarries whose distant clangour begins presently to fall faintly on the ear. Nant Ffrancon signifies "the valley of the beavers," the presence of that valuable and marvellous little beast in ancient Wales being well assured by the high place accorded to its skin in the list of prices fixed by the great law-making king, Howel Dda, in the tenth century. Any one familiar with the meadows created by the beavers in the backwoods of Canada, could well bring himself to fancy that the green flats below, through which the naturally impetuous Ogwen steals in so subdued a current, had been the scene of their industry in former days.

Hopeless as it would be to attempt here a notice of the numerous lakes and tarns and waterfalls that lie buried amid the mountains, on either hand, I may perhaps indulge in one backward glance across the valley to the gloomy glen that comes down from one of the wildest and most sombre of Welsh tarns, Llyn Idwal. In former days the shepherds believed the latter to be the abode of demons, and were well assured that no bird dare fly across its precipice-shadowed waters. But we know already that Idwal, the youthful son of the Great Owen Gwynedd, was murdered here and flung into the dark watery depths by his foster-father Dunawt ap Nefydd Hardd. For we stood, it will be remembered, in the churchyard at

Llanrwst upon the very ground by whose gift the murderer sought redemption for a crime that seems to have shocked North Wales even in the bloodstained century that followed the Norman conquest. How it is that Dunawt escaped with his life, and lived to make in his old age such reparation, history does not say.

There is no likelihood of slipping by the Penrhyn slate quarries without ample evidence of their existence. Half the side of a mountain seems to have been sliced away and ribbed with mammoth terraces along which men and trucks go crawling like a host of busy ants, while a dull and intermittent roar goes floating down the valley, and rolling up the mountain gorges, to die away upon the hills above. The strike of '96 and '97 made the world acquainted with the magnitude of the operations, and the vast interests which the ancient Welsh house of Penrhyn controlled. Volumes could be written, and possibly have been written, on the quarry men and the quarry villages of North Wales. So technical a matter lies far outside our modest scope, even if it harmonized with our mood. In a passing superficial manner there is little to be said, except perhaps a foolish regret for the lamentable eyesore that such great quarrying centres as Festiniog and Bethesda form upon the fair face of Wales. The latter is a town of miners' cottages, shops and dissenting chapels—the headquarters indeed of Carnarvonshire Nonconformity—and contains many thousand souls. Unsightly as these places are, we may, by way of small mercies, be thankful that there is at least no smoke. But this is, after all, a poor and petty point of view. Slate, such as North Wales has, is a rare treasure for any country to possess, and one far above gold and rubies. It is one of those commodities that the world must and will have, and of which there is not elsewhere a too lavish or, at any rate, too accessible supply: so Wales, it seems, may be happy and rich in her slate quarries for generations to come. It is a good thing, too, to know that the Welsh quarryman is a thrifty soul, and a man of two interests, as he is

obliged to be for the most part of two languages, and that his hereditary love of the land has not been lost amid the sunless caverns of Snowdonia. A cottage and a piece of land seem necessary to his happiness and ambition, and to the latter he devotes his leisure hours with meritorious assiduity.

We English of the south, and Welsh of Wales too, for that matter, hear at all times and all seasons, and with infinite meekness, of the superiority of the Northern Englishman as miner, mill hand, or what not, over the rest of his countrymen. With the same insistence, and from the same sources we learn, that, as regards the bigger wages his superior force of character and adroitness earn, he is a very prodigal of prodigals and that a great catastrophe would find him, as a passing emergency often does, not a whit the better for his past successes, a hapless detached unit in fact, with nothing but his furniture, clothes, and a butcher's bill to fall back upon. Unless the North consistently maligns itself, independence would seem to be cultivated there by its working man more in manners, surely, than in practice! I don't know that anybody ever blows the Welshman's trumpet, and there are no doubt wastrels in Wales as there are thrifty souls in the North. But it is quite certain that the man who thinks more of a possible rainy day, and of satisfying his land hunger, when times are flush, than of cultivating a meretricious appetite for undercut and champagne, is not the worst citizen of the two. The white cottages amid their net-work of stone walls that so liberally sprinkle the green hills outside the quarry villages have much significance in this respect, and if Bethesda does think more of the movements of the obscurest of its preachers than of a Cabinet Minister, we may perhaps consider the account as somewhat more than balanced.

Once out of a quarry village however you may shake its dirt fairly off your feet. It neither fouls the air, nor withers the trees, nor blackens the country around it. For the five mile run down from Bethesda to Bangor, and the Menai Straits

all is an ornate, luxuriant, well-ordered country telling of the very heart of a great estate. The Ogwen, still clear and brown as when it leaped beneath our feet out of its parent lake into the cataract of Penclog, urges an impetuous course beside us under bowers of leaves. And as the road swings to the left, and crosses the river by a high stone bridge, there is a fine reach of sparkling rapids coursing through the stately timber of Cochwillan woods. It is about now too in the rains and floods of July, should there be such, that the salmon and the sea trout come speeding from the sea up these turbulent Welsh streams. Here they gather in the deep crystal pools showing when the water clears to those whose eyes are trained to see them, their dark forms trailing above the gravelly bottom and giving much disgust beyond a doubt to the trout, who through the spring and summer had reigned there undisputed.

What angler, with a soul within him, can pass the spot where as a youngster he landed his first big fish, without some quickening of the pulse, or, worse still, dropping into reminiscence. It is quite inevitable therefore that I should risk my reader's jeers, and hang a moment over this old parapet and recall a day, ah! how many years ago, when as a school-boy in round jackets, flogging eagerly the pool down yonder with no dream of anything nobler than at best a half-pound trout, I found myself of a sudden engaged on hopelessly unequal terms with a veritable whale—a six-pound salmon fresh run from the sea!

The contest would have of a truth been brief enough, had not a friendly keeper burst upon the scene in the very nick of time. The river was high and the rapids strong, the tackle such as one uses on a Devonshire brook in June. But that fish was landed, though, at a spot very far indeed from where he was hooked, and not till my friend the keeper had jumped in more than once up to his middle, to carry the little rod round projecting trees. A prouder mortal than I, was that evening, with the head and tail and much of the body of

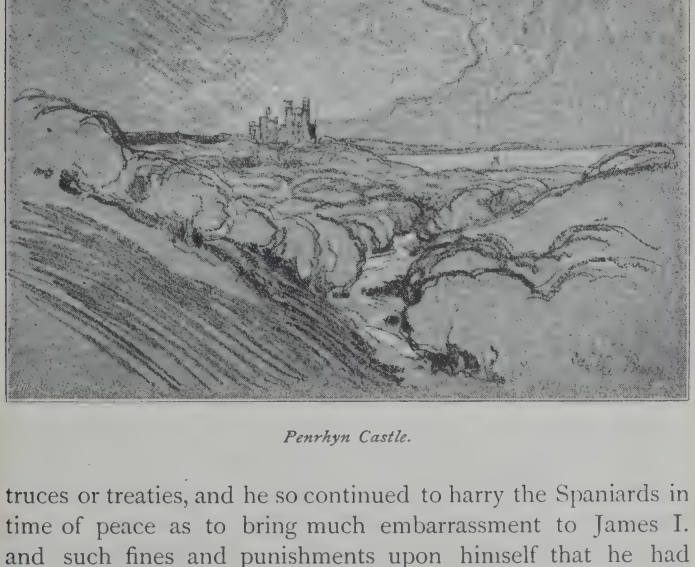
a salmon gaping ostentatiously out of a trout-basket, never probably tramped the streets of Bangor. Nor, perhaps, was the keeper's share in the performance too loudly insisted upon. Indeed, that excellent veteran was so pleased with himself, that he very nearly forgot the original object of his advent on the river bank, which was to inquire by what, in the name of all that was meet and right, a brat of fourteen was venturing to flog the sacred pools of the Penrhyn water. To give good reason was simple enough, but how to compensate the skilful Welshman for his priceless assistance and a ducking to the middle of his waistcoat into the bargain, was a sore dilemma for the moment. But the particulars of this and its ultimate solution are of less than no moment here.

Penrhyn castle is of no antiquity, but its great towers stand proudly up above the surrounding woodlands. Besides the thousands of human beings who live and work upon its rich possessions here, there are vast estates in the Peninsula of Lleyn, which we shall hear of later. Though not an ancient building, it is an ancient and a famous seat. Indeed, a palace of Roderic, grandson of Cadwallader, stood here in the 8th century.

> "Abode of native chiefs, of bards the theme,
> Here princely Penrhyn soars above the stream,
> And phœnix-like in rising splendour drest,
> Towers o'er its wide domain with regal crest."

Archbishop Williams, or "Keeper Williams" of Conway memory, came to own it before he died, and he lies buried in the little church yonder of Llandegai. From the marriage, too, of Henry VII.'s Breton son, De Velville, into this house, it will be remembered, came the famous Catherine of Berain, the "Mother of Wales." For the Griffiths lived here in the time of Elizabeth, whose last male representative should be held in high and lasting honour as the only North Welshman

who cut a brilliant figure among the sea captains of that stirring age. Sir Piers Griffith, at the first whisper of the Armada, manned and victualled a ship at Beaumaris in hot haste, and sailed round Cardigan Bay and the Land's End to join the Channel squadron, and afterwards served with much distinction with Drake and others in the Spanish main. Indeed, this Lord of Penrhyn had such a taste for sea roving, that, like his great leader, his restless soul took little reck of



Penrhyn Castle.

truces or treaties, and he so continued to harry the Spaniards in time of peace as to bring much embarrassment to James I. and such fines and punishments upon himself that he had to part with his estates. Archbishop Williams, however, half a century later, who was of the Griffith blood, brought both Penrhyn and Cochwillan back into the family. Here, too, at Penrhyn, is still treasured the famous Hirlâs Horn, to which Owen Cyfeiliog, Prince of Powis, wrote a well-known

and stirring ode in the 12th century, that a modern bard has paraphrased :—

> " Fill high, fill high, the Hirlâs horn,
> Brimmed with Sunlight like the morn,
> Deep and vast and fit to drown
> All the troubles of a crown ;
> Deep and vast and crowned with mead,
> 'Tis a cup for kings indeed ;
> Full of courage, full of worth,
> Making man a god on earth.
> Warriors, heroes, Cambrian-born,
> Drink—from the Hirlâs horn ! "

A great deal beyond a doubt could be said of Bangor. But when one has travelled for twenty miles along such a road as this, and finds oneself face to face with a cathedral and University town of ten thousand souls, and all our space frittered away, rightly or wrongly, among scenes that seem to take our fancy more, what is there to be done? There is nothing indeed worthy of much remark in the winding, narrow streets, which mostly trend towards the cathedral precincts, and do not seem to have altered within my memory, though at the opening of the century there were not two thousand people in the place. Bangor Cathedral is, of all British cathedrals, held in least repute, as an edifice that is to say. For if, as I ventured to remark at St. Asaph, we choose to think of something else than architecture, there is no end to the thoughts which its stones and site and precincts, and, indeed, so venerable a building, may awaken. St. Deiniol founded it in the 6th century, and became its first abbot. The Saxon Harold gutted it, in part at any rate. Owen Glyndwr burnt it wholly down ; Owen Gwynedd lies buried beneath it. But to talk about what has been done on this time-honoured spot, would be to write the history of Wales.

Students in cap and gown streaming up and down the street, or loitering round the old Cathedral yard, give a touch of

academic distinction to Bangor, and remind us that one of the three colleges that form the University of Wales is here. There is also an ancient grammar school (now reconstructed), founded in the 16th century, on the site of a convent of White Friars, and of some repute in bye-gone Wales, and known as the "Friars' School." Some of the instructions issued to its masters in the time of Queen Elizabeth give a glimpse of higher education as then known in Wales. "They shall instruct their scholars," so runs the ancient ordinance, "in good nurture and civil manners, as with good literature, with exercise, to speak Latin and other honest discipline. They shall watch the poorest man's child as the richest without partiality. Nor shall any scholars be so hardy as to come to schoole with his head unkempt, his hands or face unwashed, his shoes unclean, his capp, hosen or vesture, filthy or rent. They *shall use to speak Latin* as well without ye school as within." The manner in which "pronunciation and utterance" and "accent" are insisted on, speaks significantly of the ousting of Welsh as a polite language. Fridays were to be given up to epigrams and verse, while the ordained amusements were cross-bow and running base. The master, moreover, was cautioned "to use such mildness of countenance and gentleness of speech that he may inflame the dullard, if any such there be, to study."

Bangor cherishes with much fervour that spirit of rivalry towards its sister towns that is so notable in Wales. The national aspirations find in the very spirit of localism that feeds them a serious drag upon their flights. Whether it is a football match (for the towns, I need not say, are in this respect emancipated), or an Eisteddfod, or a new college, an amount of heat is introduced that would astonish the phlegmatic Saxon. There are, for example, three colleges and three bodies of professors in little Wales, at Bangor, Cardiff and Aberystwyth, with all the waste and weakness one may fairly presume this must imply, because every town of note would have the new

University within their own bounds or nowhere. When people had to traverse the mountains on "dreadful horse-paths" like old Pennant, there might have been some logic in this distribution of an endowment fund, and the talent that it could provide. But the present state of things is surely a standing monument to the fact that local prejudices are superior even to Welsh national enthusiasm. The Welsh University graduate looks forward in the main to a career in his own country. But with music it is a wholly different matter. Yet if a speaker at a rural Eisteddfod wishes to win a round of applause, he advocates in stirring language a Welsh academy of music. It does not seem to occur to him or to his hearers that the products of such an institution would have to compete with men and women who had culled the best that France and England, Germany or Belgium could provide, at no more expense worth mentioning, and with an absolute indifference to national, much less provincial prejudices. It would be a poor consolation to the young Welshman, when it came to a question of bread and butter, to say nothing of fame, that he had contributed his mite to a strained form of local patriotism, and earned applause in Cardiff or Bangor recitations. And then, again, where would the Academy be? There would have to be two at any rate, if not three.

Upper Bangor, perched upon a high hill above the town, where many of its well-to-do people have their homes, is delightful. From here you have upon one side the Carnarvon mountains, but a few miles distant, banked up in much majesty against the sky. Upon the other, the Menai Straits, whose currents, marvellous in their colouring as they are vehement in their tides, rush for miles through the narrow channel that separates the leafy and ornate shores of otherwise bleak Anglesey from those of Carnarvon. Beaumaris is yonder, not three miles off, lying along the further shore, with its cheery streets and grassy sea front and ivied castle, looking out over an expanse of sea and mountain that only Barmouth and Pwllheli

can perhaps rival. Beyond it is Penmon Abbey, still, in great part, surviving on its grassy slopes, and Puffin Island or Priest-home, with its ruined tower, where saints of old sought solitude and refuge from the attentions of the ladies. There too are the woods where Llanfaes Abbey stood, which Llewelyn raised over the tomb of his wife, Joan, the daughter of King John, and where Henry IV., in his first expedition against Glyndwr, sat



Bangor from Beaumaris.

down to wreak his vengeance on the Franciscans whom he suspected of favouring the rebel cause.

There again are the wide parklands of Baron Hill, where, since the Wars of the Roses, the Bulkeleys have reigned as great lords in Anglesey: the stout-hearted Sir Richard of that ilk, who so manfully took his country's part against Leicester in the Denbigh disputes, being, I trust, not yet forgotten by the reader.

Behind this strip of luxuriance, and but half a dozen miles

across the bare hills of Anglesey, all aglow with their white-washed homesteads, lies the farmhouse of Penmynydd, the cradle of the Tudor race, whence came that handsome Owen Tudor whose beauty and audacity won him the heart and hand of the widow of Henry V. The kitchen of the old manor house is still intact, and the Tudor arms and initials can yet be seen carved about the buildings. The yard is there, at any rate, where the ancestress of our reigning House was shelling peas surrounded by her goats, when, if the old tale be true, the deputation sent from London to inquire into her rank, arrived upon the scene. How they were cajoled by her son into "cooking their report," and counting the goats as servants, and converting the ducks into a body-guard, is a matter of common fame. The Tudors were, in fact, average and typical Welsh squires of the remoter and more turbulent districts. Henry VII., in a quite unseemly fashion, agitated himself about his pedigree, and incurred thereby, both at the time and since, much ridicule. Both the one and the other seem superfluous. There were few great landowners in North Wales in those days. A handful of chieftains of royal blood, with as many Norman barons, stood out in dignity of possession above the mass of gentry descended from the "fifteen noble tribes," among whom there was but little inequality.

There might have been sore friction as to which groups were entitled to this last distinction. But happily in the reign of Henry II. the bards, who were the keepers and arbiters of such matters, foreseeing the lamentable changes impending over Wales, settled this question once and for all, and published on the strength of their pedigrees a roll of honour which seems to have been accepted, and was henceforth and for ever in North Wales to divide the sheep from the goats. This bald statement may give a notion that the bards settled so weighty a matter in an offhand and arbitrary fashion. On the contrary, their researches went back, we are told, to the ninth century. And as genealogy was their profession, and furthermore as

every Welshman gave them a good basis to start on, seeing that he carried from six to eight of his most recent ancestors at the tail of his everyday name, would-be aristocrats and pretenders to long descent had not, I should imagine, very much chance of getting on the immortal list which was made in the days of Henry II., and Owen Gwynedd. The Tudors were neither greater nor less than the rest of their class. They had taken their share in every war and every local quarrel, even to the days of Glyndwr, with whom many of them were out, and carried, if I mistake not, the Englishmen's heads upon their quarterings, showing thereby their descent from the great Ednyfed Vychan. One may infer also that they were as a breed distinguished for their manly beauty, if the tale be true that, when specimens of them were forwarded to London for Queen Catherine's inspection prior to her marriage with their relative, she declared "they were the finest dumb animals she had ever seen"—an allusion of course to their ignorance of either the French or English tongue.

A Welsh pedigree is in truth not a thing to be spoken of lightly nor looked at frivolously. Indeed, I think it would soon sober any one who approached it in an inquiring fashion without some training and qualifications. Happily there are many good men and true who, like the bards of old, but without their glory, honour and emoluments, make this dark science their hobby, and devote their leisure to preserving those links which for ages and ages have bound all the landed families of North Wales together in such singular and striking and, I may add, bewildering fashion.

From Bangor, too, you get a glorious view of the great headland of Penmænmawr, that we saw from its other side at Conway: and its precipitous cliffs, which drop from such an immense height into the sea, recall the horror it inspired among travellers of the 17th and 18th centuries who went to Ireland, as they did even then in increasing numbers, viâ Holyhead. The terrors of the narrow road cut in the cliff, and rendered only a

trifle less appalling with each generation, are the burden of a score of writers. Dr. Johnson tells us how frightened he was at the prospect, and how relieved when he got safely to Bangor, where he found some difficulty in procuring a lodging "in a mean Inn and in a room where the other bed had two men." "A narrow pathway for passengers," says Camden, "rocks hanging over one above and the raging sea beneath." Sir John Bramston, writing in 1631, tells us he had to "lift his wife over the back of the saddle for her fright." This was the only road to Holyhead at that time, and the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in the next century approved a scheme for making it "*nowhere less than four feet wide*, and at present too well known for its deep and dangerous passage." By 1770 they had achieved a road seven feet wide, and protected in the worst places by a wall one foot high! At last the nerves of Irish travellers could stand it no longer, and the city of Dublin subscribed sufficient to make a wall breast high between passengers and the yawning abyss below, for the present road is much lower down than this awesome horse-path on which our forefathers travelled.

One method however of crossing to Anglesey was sometimes followed which must have been yet more exciting. There are some three miles of sand uncovered here at the entrance of the Menai for a brief period at low tide, leaving a narrow channel in the middle. Across this channel a ferry in the 17th century used to ply, and by brisk riding at the right moment this plan answered admirably. But when, as in the case of the above mentioned Sir John Bramston and his son, who, on a certain occasion, arriving at the ferry, with the waters already up to their horses' girths, found the ferrymen on the other side drunk and unresponsive to their summons, it was a very serious matter indeed. Young Bramston began inquiring anxiously of his father if he could swim: though that would have been, so far from land, but a forlorn hope. The ferrymen however pulled themselves together just in time to avert

a catastrophe. The nerves of the distinguished travellers seem to have been considerably shaken by the incident, for they were to have lain at Holyhead over Sunday, and the parson had gone so far as to prepare an English sermon for their refreshment. But the wind being fair they left his reverence with his sermon unpreached, but at the same time their own dinner untasted, so the good man, we are told, found some consolation in eating it himself.



The Coast Road near Penmœnmawr.

In the year 1685 the Earl of Clarendon and his friend, Sir Paul Rycaut, on their way to Holyhead in private carriages, stopped at Conway to take breath, and at the same time, serious counsel with the natives how best to circumvent the dreaded barrier. Sir Paul decided to lie low, waiting, in short, to see how his noble friend got over. The Dean of Bangor, however, sent two honest fellows to the Earl's assistance, who, to the latter's astonishment, got his carriage safely over by putting one

horse before the other. How Sir Paul fared history does not say, but it would have served him right if his lordship had then left him to shift for himself, as very possibly he did. Such were the humours and the risks of travel for those who preferred the shorter sea journey to Ireland in the days of old.

CHAPTER XIII.

BANGOR TO TREMADOC.

It is through a country exceeding rich and fair that the smooth road carries us over the nine miles between Bangor and Carnarvon. Hitherto the strip of lowland between the mountains and the sea has been but a mile or so in width, along the whole coast line, from the Clwyd and beyond. The life and wealth that fill it, moreover, have come chiefly from outside. But west of Bangor the mountains trend inland, and leave an interval of several miles, over which a rich grass country spreads in pleasant undulations from their bases to the Menai Straits. Wealth and prosperity, in another sense, are greatly in evidence ; but they are chiefly indigenous and of the soil. Thousands of tourists pass through here every year, but the money they leave behind them is a secondary matter. Slate is here king, like corn in Kansas and cotton in the Carolinas, and asserts its supremacy in tones that are much more strident and are rarely silent. Its distant thunders float down from the tortured flanks of the Snowdon mountains towards the Menai, and in clear, still weather, hardly die till they have caught the ear of the Anglesey farmer as he turns his plough upon the headland or counts his sheep upon the hill.

Now there is a corner of Nottinghamshire known as the Dukeries, where the estates of three great dukes meet. You

may travel there for miles and find nature in every direction attuned to the dignity of its illustrious ownership, the ragged corners straightened, the rough ways made smooth; all the usual traces of the average country squire or the small freeholder eliminated. This corner of Carnarvonshire, relatively speaking, and upon a less magnificent scale, might almost be called the Dukeries of North Wales. There are three paramount landowners in Carnarvonshire and one in Anglesey, and they dominate this region on both sides of the Menai. In old times there were almost no rich landowners in the principality. "A poor gentleman of Wales" was a current phrase, used freely by Welsh squires themselves, with a fine unconsciousness that there was anything in it to be ashamed of. This was partly owing to the backwardness of the country, but also to the more general distribution of land. Small properties within the last century have been freely absorbed. Where there were four country gentlemen in Carnarvon and Merioneth there is now one. But here Lord Penrhyn, Mr. Assheton-Smith, and Lord Newborough's family (for the estate has lately been split up) reign supreme, and own so much of the county, even to its furthest limits, all other names seem dwarfed, to say nothing of the great slate quarries whose profits and immense output are not influenced by the weather or the American wheat crop.

Just across the Menai, too, beneath us, is Plâs Newydd, where dwells the most potent lord in Anglesey—the marquis of that name. Nowhere else in North Wales is so much power and influence concentrated in so few hands, for the towns of Bangor and Carnarvon are wholly within the sphere of Penrhyn and Vaynol respectively. And nowhere in Great Britain I believe it may fairly be said is power and wealth of this kind exercised more justly and beneficiently. No county is more thoroughly Welsh than Carnarvon, in speech and thought, and in the strength of its Nonconformity. Whatever else strikes, fomented land agitations, and the Welsh commission have done, they have demonstrated to those who did not know it before how

admirably in the face of great temptation to reduce the wages of quarrymen and to force up agricultural rents, these great estates have been administered. And they tell their story upon their face.

Of course, if there were time, one ought to go down and see the great suspension bridge which, in 1826, Telford crowned his life's work by throwing across the Menai. How little the thousands who shouted at the opening function of this, the greatest wonder in its way the world had seen, how



The Tubular and Suspension Bridges over the Menai.

little they recked, that in a dozen years or so the stage coach, the culmination of whose glories the new bridge was in fact celebrating, would, as an institution, be irrevocably doomed. It is a curious object lesson upon that period of quick, almost pathetically quick, transition, these two bridges, the suspension and the tubular, leaping the straits side by side ; both, too, built with one object in view—that of connecting England and Ireland. We may read how proudly the first London coach, the "Oxonian," crossed the new bridge in 1826, slowing down a bit from its

regulation pace of eleven miles an hour, and loaded with its dozen and a half of passengers and the Irish mail-bags—the very embodiment of rapid travelling for all measurable time to come, as it surely seemed. Within twenty years Stephenson had begun that other great structure, through which a far different kind of Irish mail, bearing a very different weight of burden, was to go bounding at fifty miles an hour.

All this Menai shore of Anglesey is as rich, and wooded, and ornate, and residential, as the rest of the island is bare and, for the most part, away from its rugged coast line, uninteresting to behold, for there are in it neither hills nor woods nor streams worth mentioning. If it were not so populous and so closely fenced and cultivated, there might be some charm of wildness about the island, seeing the romance that attaches both to its situation and to its history, though of a truth the view of the Snowdon Mountains from almost every part of it is infinitely grand. Every now and again too, upon its western shore, a great marsh or traeth goes cleaving the low cultivated undulations for miles and miles inland. And here congregate in winter upon the shaking bogs and in the reedy pools such quantities of wildfowl that the island has much reputation among English sportsmen. Over the low uplands, peewits swoop and wheel by hundreds and thousands, filling the whole air with their plaintive cries. The winter winds, if not gently, blow, at any rate, balmily across this favoured isle of Mona, and the long ridges swelling ever onward, carrying each its burden of small farms and whitewashed homesteads and big garish chapels, spend many a winter day bathed in sunlight and soft breezes when the Snowdon Mountains are hanging in the sky a sheet of glittering snow.

The Princes of North Wales chose to have their chief abode at Aberffraw, upon this same low-lying western shore of Anglesey. There is little left now to recall the royal manor and the ancient palace where the Llewelyns and their predecessors held their court and hunted, and gathered the bards together in the

not too frequent intervals of peace. The next best thing however to surviving stones is still preserved to us in the *Record of Carnarvon*, and that is a map or plan of this royal manor of Aberffraw with many particulars of holdings, tenancies, and the rents in kind and labour paid by each in the 13th century. It is perhaps hardly worth while remarking that the English manorial system had, long before the close of Welsh independence, insensibly crept in, modified the tribal custom, and here and there suspended it. As it would



Looking up Menai Straits.

involve a discussion on these same tribal customs which were the basis of Welsh society, an excursion into ground like this, which is strewn with the hair and blood of contentious antiquaries, would be an outrage here. And for me, a humble follower of their discussions, to drag my reader into such a field, would be the blind leading the blind indeed, and upon a quest moreover upon which he does not, in all probability, in the least wish to be led.

Rowlands's "Mona Antiqua" and Seebohm's "Tribal Wales" are the kind of books with which an intelligent visitor to Anglesey

should fortify himself. To the lovers of cromlechs and dolmens, and pre-historic camps, Anglesey is a treasure island, and they turn to it with joy; while as the last sanctuary of the Druids it must always, with all its bareness, strike some awe even into the most careless mind. But there are plenty of people, Welshmen mostly, who care for none of these things, yet who turn to the quiet sea coast hamlets of Mona for a holiday. For the air there is fresh and bracing; the people, except round Holyhead and the Menai banks, primitive and innocent of English almost to a man, while the seas break finely upon rockbound headlands, or lap gently upon firm and yellow sands.

Now when I was at school there used to be a word in the Greek dictionary, whose prodigious length was the delight of all small boys, particularly idle ones. It tickled their sense of humour: the most hopeless dunce in the lower forms could reel off that word, which I have no doubt only found a place in the dictionary from having been concocted and used by some eccentric character in a famous play. The lout at the bottom of the form who was shaky in his declensions would twist the arm of the small and clever boy at the top till he had gone through the useless performance. Anglesey, like the Greek dictionary, has a word that is treated in very much the same frivolous fashion by the travelling public, with this difference, that it is the name of a large village, lying now almost within sight of us, and the Englishman has never yet lived who could say it from memory correctly and without halting. It is the first station over the bridge, and its full name is, Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerchwyrndrobwlltysiliogogogoch. It is in fact the first specimen of Anglesey nomenclature that the intelligent traveller would encounter on entering the sacred isle, and it might well give him pause. But there is an "if" in the question, and as this purports to be a veracious narrative, I must hasten to acquit the natives of using so fearsome an arrangement of letters, even in their most fervent

moments of Kymric enthusiasm. Indeed, except in shop windows at Bangor where I have seen the full name of the village printed on a card and sold for a penny to tourists, it is remorselessly reduced and even vulgarised to Llanfair P. G., though there are local purists I believe who will recognise nothing less than Llanfair-pwllgwyngyll, which after all is a trifle if you have grasped the elements of Welsh pronunciation.

As Bangor commands the eastern entrance to the Menai, so its rival dominates the western. But Carnarvon is the bigger and busier town of the two. It was the chief Roman station



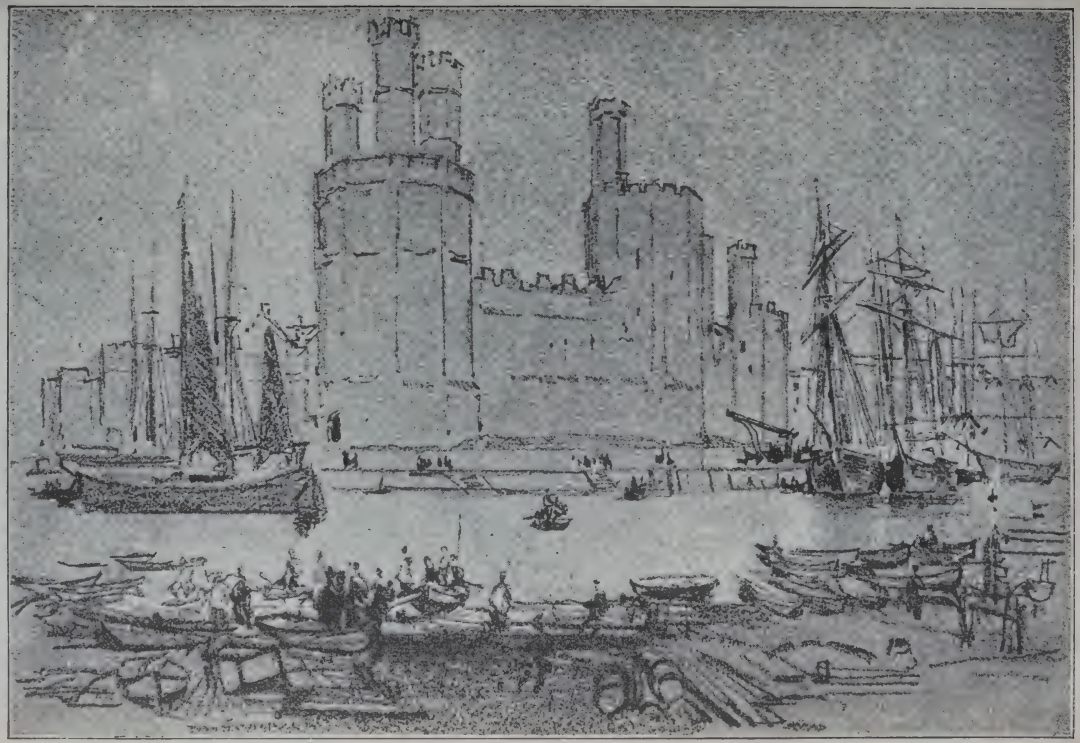
The Walls at Carnarvon.

(Segontium) of North Wales and it is now its chief town. There is nothing much, however, to detain us in its streets, which are quietly prosperous and peacefully busy, or what there might be, is forgotten in the presence of the magnificent castle, only matched in all Britain by that of Alnwick in the far North, though even Alnwick cannot match it in the tale it tells. It stands upon the point, where the narrow estuary of the Seiont joins the Menai, here a mile in width, and rapidly expanding to the sea. It is oblong in shape, and covers nearly three acres of ground. Two of its sides look down upon the water, and

tower above the masts of the shipping that throng the harbour. The others frown over a deep moat upon that older part of the town which has lain for so many centuries beneath their shadow. "The most magnificent badge of our subjection," an old Welsh antiquary calls Carnarvon Castle whose vast size and wonderful preservation strike one in a fashion that, I think, no previous acquaintance, made in print or on canvas, fully prepares one for.

Conway and Harlech are great and grim, superb, defiant. Their situations are incomparable. Carnarvon has not this rare distinction of pose, but it more than fills the eye with its own vast proportions and for a moment looks as if it were even yet in truth not dead, but lived. Art and beauty were here, beyond a doubt, as much in the mind of Edward's great architect, de Elfreton, as power and strength, and the latter in all conscience have not been sacrificed. The many and massive towers, whose walls of dressed limestone eight feet thick, are raised from 100 to 140 feet above the tide are not round as at Conway, but octagonal, or its equivalent, slender and graceful turrets, miniatures of themselves springing from their battlements. The Eagle tower, so called from a crest of Edward II. who was born in it has three of these, one at any rate of which, may be ascended to the infinite advantage of those who do not shrink from so mild a venture. For the outlook towards Anglesey on the one hand and the mountains on the other, and down upon the old town beneath is not a thing to be missed.

Carnarvon looks something more than a great fortress planted by a great king as a token of his might and resolution. It seems built to be the palace and dwelling place, as well as the stronghold and rock of defence, of potent princes. Pomp and pageant of a royal kind should have prevailed here, as well as the clash of arms, since for such it was surely built. But since Queen Eleanor passed in at the gate which still bears her name, and gave birth in due time, to the infant prince whom Edward made the medium of such a grim practical joke upon the Welsh, few scenes of much national moment have written



Carnarvon Castle.

themselves upon its history. Kings have since been here it is true. Richard II. for a few hours only ; Henry IV. more than once in his futile pursuits of Glyndwr ; Henry V., as a prince on the same errand, almost certainly. The French in Glyndwr's wars came here as his allies, both by sea and land, and always in vain. In the Wars of the Roses and of the Parliament, it stood ever side by side with Conway. Every notable warrior, Welsh, Norman or English who helped to make history in this corner of Britain has figured within or without the walls of Carnarvon Castle. It has been starved into surrender, but never vanquished by force of arms.

Indeed what could bows and arrows, or battering rams, or primitive cannon, have availed against such a place as this? What could scaling ladders have effected on such a precipice of mortared limestone pierced with slits vomiting forth arrows, and guarded by armed men and flanked by loopholed towers? It is giddy work even walking along these lofty walls. Yet it does take one somewhat aback, to find how very small a garrison was required to hold these masterpieces of Norman skill against any odds that might turn up. A hundred men at arms and archers seem, at a pinch, to have been regarded as sufficient for the safety even of Carnarvon, while forty or fifty stood siege in the other castles, for months together, in the long wars of the fifteenth century. Busy as the masons have been kept this long time, under skilful and loving superintendence in Carnarvon Castle, it is rather in safeguarding its precious walls and towers, than in that kind of restoration one has learnt rather to dread that their work has happily lain. To all intents and purposes the splendid fabric remains as it was left by Edward II. The grass grown courtyard must of course be refilled by fancy with vanished buildings, whose dimensions and site are plain enough and made still more plain by friendly antiquaries. The staircases, too, and tiers of floorless chambers, and winding corridors and long passages pierced for archers, will give any one who loves groping in these ancient ways a good half-day's ramble. But as I have said this splendid

pile was surely built for kings to dwell in, not to be held during times of peace, as for the greater part of its animate life it was held, by a governor, at a salary of a £100 a year, and a score or two of men at arms and archers. Pennant says it was built by the forced labour of Welsh peasants within a year and the money wrung from the Welsh chieftains who had failed so gloriously in that last fateful struggle by the side of the two Llewelyns. But this is more than doubtful, and in any case could only apply to the part which the first Edward built, for his son most certainly finished it.



Carnarvon Castle.

Indeed there is no such vagueness about the raising of Carnarvon Castle. Antiquaries have been busy for fifty years upon the subject, and the existence of ample records have crowned their labours with much success. The progress of the work, the number of men employed, and even their wages—all these have been extracted, and unhappily, too, the story of Prince Edward having been born in the narrow chamber shown as the scene of that notable event, has suffered lamentably in the process, though it still has its local champions who would break a lance with any

sceptic, however fortified with evidence to the contrary he might be. Indeed with the aid of these devoted gentlemen, living and dead, I could gossip for two or three pages about the building of this epoch-marking pile, and for as many more from memory alone as to the strange and stirring things that its walls saw in the days of Glyndwr's wars as well as before and after. But it is just as well, perhaps, that the necessity for surmounting the pass of Llanberis in this chapter bids me repress at once any such garrulous tendencies, and merely state the fact that work commenced here in 1284 and did not finally cease till 1322.

As a last word on Carnarvon, it is worth noting that the first representative of Edward I. in this town was one Sir Roger de Pulestone, and that in the futile rebellion of Madoc against his power, ten years after the conquest, this same individual was overcome by the insurgents and hanged. Furthermore that the first member the Carnarvon boroughs ever sent to Parliament in Henry VIII.'s reign was a John Pulestone. And lastly that the present governor of Carnarvon Castle under the crown is still a Pulestone. I do not know what relation the present Sir John is to the ancient John of 1520, or the hapless but loyal Roger of 1294, but I do know that he was born in North Wales and bears the very uncommon but historic Cambrio-Norman name. Over the great Gothic gateway of the castle the figure of its founder looks proudly out over the country he has conquered. His hand grasps his sword hilt and the sword itself is half drawn from the scabbard as if in menacing and significant fashion. And we may take note also that Carnarvon has for its municipal device the three eagles of Owen Gwynedd, which may be seen, moreover, upon the quarterings of many an old Welsh family who boast his blood, and still live within sight of the Peak of Snowdon. It was one of three "English towns" peopled, protected and endowed by its second founder Edward I., though as at Conway the old English burgher families have, in name at least, died out.

After the castle, the pride of the modern citizen of Carnarvon

is in his Twt-hill, a lofty eminence in the town, greatly resorted to, before which lies spread forty miles of mountain peaks beginning with Penmaenmawr upon the East, centring in Snowdon and ending in the West with the bold heights of the Rivals. There is no occasion, however, for us to ascend this favourite vantage point of the Carnarvon townsfolk, as we are already bowling away upon a fine broad road towards the same wild array of mountains and making for the gap, where lies beside its lakes, that little centre of slate operatives and tourists, Llanberis. It is a pleasant country, this green lowland of Carnarvon. We have seen its counterpart before at many other stages of this little journey. Perhaps the meadows and the pastures, and the scarcer tillage fields, and the grey and white homesteads, have something of the smoothness of a great estate. The stone walls are straighter, the hedges less riotous, the woodlands trimmer, the gnarled oak trees and the bracken glades less obvious, than by most Welsh highways. But that is a trifle, for over the green billowy foreground the whole range of Snowdon, the mountains of Eryri fill the eye. Seiont, whose mouth reflects the battlements of Carnarvon, and carries its shipping, is up here but a brawling brook. Nor is it anywhere far from us, and finally guides our road into the shadow of the mountains and to the banks of Llyn Padarn, the lower of the two long narrow lakes that fill the entrance to Llanberis pass.

I do not care for Llyn Padarn, though the view from one part of its banks of Snowdon and the Glydyrs piled up in the sky ahead is very fine. In the days when the Welsh princes hunted through this country, and had a lodge at Dinorwig yonder across the lake, and a fine palace at Aber, under Carnedd Llewelyn, it was beyond a doubt in keeping and sympathy with the grandeur of the still unspoiled wilderness into which it leads. Now however there is too much traffic about it. The tourist even where thickest does not damage nature so much as is supposed. But the capitalist is another matter. There were mines working in Llanberis over a hundred and forty years

ago at any rate, but now the quarrying industry is altogether too much in evidence, and along the treeless shores of a lake, which in absolute solitude would be impressive, a railroad rumbles with great commotion, while there is a hum and stir in the atmosphere generally, and an upheaval and interference with nature that discount even the majestic and silent background. Llanberis town neither charms nor interests, unless you would stop to see the little engine with its appendant cars start on its long journey for the distant peak of Snowdon. One would push on rather, leaving the big hotel and shops and quarrymen's houses and the railroad behind, over the green flats, through which the infant Seiont rushes from lake to lake, hoping in Llyn Peris to find a more congenial atmosphere.

But any such expectations would be woefully disappointed. Llyn Peris like Llyn Padarn, though for a shorter distance, fills the narrow valley and must once have been a beautiful enough spot, grand and solitary. Even now I am not sure if from one point of view, it is not one of the weirdest scenes in Wales. Certainly it is one of the strangest. For the whole face of the mountain for hundreds of feet sheer up from the long smothered and buried banks of the gradually narrowing lake is one gigantic quarry. The summit of Elidyr Fawr lies back, serene and quiet, amid the clouds. Nothing is visible here, however, but its lacerated shoulder, rising to a prodigious height in jagged terraces laid bare by half a century's ceaseless work. It seems as if puny man were determined to expose the very entrails of this great mountain, and one might well fancy it groaning in its agony, for all the ceaseless and horrid din, the rattle of trucks, the shout of countless men, who swarm like ants along the giddy heights, the crash of falling rocks, the creaking of machinery, the roar of blasting, and when a brief interval of silence admits it, the dull splash of some avalanche of loosened debris toppling into the lake.

And amid all this uproar, the old ivy-clad tower of Dolbadarn, lifted upon a rocky knoll above the meadows that border the hither side of the lake, recalls the ancient days of Wales.

There is nothing left of it but the remains of a spiral staircase and the traces of three floors. Some say it was built in the 6th century and was a stronghold of that same Prince Maelgwyn, who died of the yellow plague at Deganwy, and fought the Saxons in the days of their first attempts on Wales. But it is enough for me, that through the Norman period this old tower was the inner sanctuary of Gwynedd. In the stormiest times it was rarely reached by alien foes. It was a state prison



Storm-clouds on Snowdon from Llyn Peris.

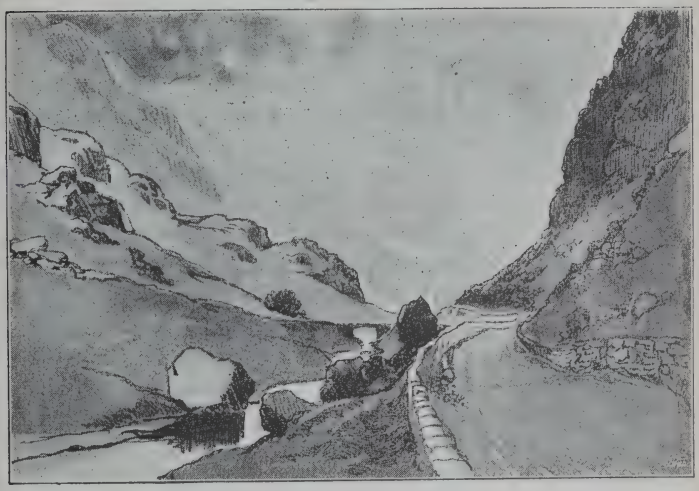
of the Welsh princes and two celebrities at any rate were here for years in durance vile. The first was Owen Goch, the third brother of Llewelyn and David, the two heroes who died with the independence of Wales. It was not creditable, according to modern ethics, that Prince Llewelyn immured him here for over twenty years, but self defence was then the primary consideration, and potential rivals or traitors were only safe under lock and key. Glyndwr, particularly in the last few years of his revolt, was frequently here; about that there is no doubt.

And in this stern ruin, around whose grass grown and shady outworks children from Llanberis are now sporting, Lord Grey of Ruthin probably languished for many a long month and meditated on the trouble he had brought on the king his master, the anarchy he had let loose on Wales, and still more perhaps on the ruin with which he himself was threatened. David Gam of Brecon, Owen's bitterest enemy, was here too as a prisoner, the faithful squire of Henry of Bolingbroke who lived to fall by his great son's side at Agincourt. But as the only castle in the wilds of Snowdon, this old tower has much significance. There is no other mediæval fortress in the heart of these mountains. Every native king and chieftain who stood at bay must have had this one as his rallying point.

When Pennant was here in 1786 at the very dawn of Welsh travel, there was a celebrated character in the shape of a muscular and athletic female, living on the banks of the lower lake, one Margaret of Penllyn. She was then about ninety years of age, "The greatest hunter, shooter and fisher of her time," says the Squire of Downing; "she kept a dozen at least of dogs, terriers, grey-hounds, spaniels, all excellent in their kinds. She killed more foxes in one year than all the confederate hunts do in ten; rowed stoutly and was queen of the lakes, fiddled excellently and knew all our old music; did not neglect the mechanic arts for she was a very good joiner, and at the age of seventy was the best wrestler in the country, and few young men dared to try a fall with her. She was also blacksmith, shoemaker, boat-builder and maker of harps. She shoed her own horses, made her own shoes and built her own boats, while she was under contract to convey the copper ore down the lakes. All the neighbouring bards paid their addresses to her and celebrated her exploits in pure British verse." In Leland's day oak forests threw their shadows on these cold lakes, and straggled far up the mountain side.

But now, as we leave the roaring slate quarries and the deep

dark water behind us, and pass through the hamlet of old Llanberis, whose church, founded by St. Peris gave its name to the spot, the wild bleak pass that for grandeur travellers hold even above Nant Ffrancon begins to open out. The eastern shoulders of Snowdon are pressing upon our right. Upon our left the western slopes of the Glydyrs rise bare and almost verdureless. The road, which winds for three miles up the narrow gorge to its summit, is admirable, but the wise man will dis-



The Pass of Llanberis.

mount and walk much of the distance, not only for the sake of his interior machinery, but that he may absorb and properly attune himself to the sublimity of the scene. I had known Wales well, for many years, before making the acquaintance of the passes of Llanberis and Nant Ffrancon, and thought I had at least gauged its limitations. But I was mistaken. For here, after losing sight of the lakes and the sound of quarries, and getting fairly into the narrow glen, and breasting the long ascent

was a scene more savage, and more awe inspiring, than I could have deemed possible, in a mountain group so limited in area and in altitude.

It is the great saddle-back, the long ridge which Snowdon flings to the north, and up which the main path and also the new railroad travels, that towers such a formidable height above us. The further side is comparatively smooth, but this one is a tumultuous chaos of rock and crag, as if Titans in some burst of fury had been rending cliffs and flinging their fragments far and wide over miles of a slope that is just sufficiently off the perpendicular to lend them a precarious lodgment. As at Nant Ffrancon, the sun on this north-eastern aspect is chary of his beams, and rocks and precipices that under a noonday blaze in a south aspect look stern enough, gather here some additional terror, if I may use the word, from the dark shadows that begin so early in the day to brood over their face. What lends much charm to these wild scenes too when the sun does touch them, and in no sense detracts from their sombre humours when it does not, is the brilliant colouring that fills every space and crevice between the blacks and the greys of rock and precipice. Heather and ferns, sweet turf glittering with the dew of mists and rains, and spouting springs, bog grasses, and the varied fauna of the Welsh mountains bloom and blaze where they can, as if in vain efforts to soften the terrors of the landscape.

It is an hour's steady climb to the top of the pass. The Wyddfa, the main peak of Snowdon, shows from time to time, and a faint white puff stealing along, what looks from here like the edge of a mighty precipice, marks the approach of Sir Edward Watkin's little train to its aerial terminus. People talk in somewhat exaggerated fashion, it seems to me, about these mountain railways, and indeed, about all railways in their connection with scenery. By one's fireside the size of a mountain is apt to dwindle, and that of a locomotive to be magnified. But when it comes to the reality, what a tiny speck is this diminutive train on the wide waste of Snowdon, passing in and out of one's

vision three or four times in the course of a long summer's day, in its tortuous journey of an hour and a half from Llanberis to the summit. There is a vague impression abroad, and I must confess to having once felt something of the kind myself, that the Snowdon railway would in some sort spoil the mountain, that its solitudes would be desecrated and shaken by the perpetual roar and clatter of a noisy locomotive. If the main line of the South Western with four tracks, and trains following one another every ten minutes along each, ran over the top of Snowdon it would be another matter. As for this little midget, it seems to me a trifle scarcely worth considering, except for the pleasure it gives to innumerable people who are still possessed of all their faculties, have eyes and brains and every necessary qualification to enable them to enjoy the noblest view in Britain, but may perchance no longer be able to climb 3,560 feet without injury or discomfort.

Even river valleys, the most beautiful of them, those threaded by tumbling streams and clothed with woodlands, valleys such as one has known and loved from childhood, and that too with the knowledge and love of a fisherman, which I maintain surpasses the knowledge and love of the most devoted admirer from the road or hill top. With what complacency after all even these, and I can think of many such, survive the invading railroad. It does not seem to me that the latter, whether in Wales or the West of England, is in truth the hideous despoiler of nature's charms that it gets credit for. Saving only for a few brief minutes in each day, the old music of the stream still fills the air. The alders, willows, and mountain ashes wave over the dark pools, and flicker on the shining shallows, and shut out the busy world as effectually as when the faint and fitful note of the coach horn was the only sound that spoke of it. The period of construction is, I admit, a lamentable one, but nature after all soon clothes and screens and mellows the new laid railway track and renders it almost as inoffensive as an average turnpike. Ferns and wild-

flowers flourish fearlessly within a yard of its very metals. Trees spread their limbs towards it till the leaves almost brush the passing trains. Wood pigeons build their nests within reach of the engine's smoke, which after all is very transitory and very harmless, while even the rabbits on the bank below only lay their ears and crouch for a few seconds, a tribute of respect they would pay to a passing ploughboy's shout. Down in the stream, whose course it of necessity often follows, the trout pay no more attention to its infrequent agitation than to a passing hay cart, and flop and splash at the March browns or evening duns as if Stephenson had never lived. The white-throated ouzel scarcely stirs on his mossy perch in mid-stream; the sandpiper on the gravelly strand stops preening his wings, and spreads them for a brief moment, only to remind himself that the effort was uncalled for and his alarm entirely foolish.

We are not now however in a Welsh valley, but on the shoulder of the greatest of Welsh mountains. Crib Goch, the sharpest of its four outlying peaks, a pile of naked rock, springs high above us close at hand. The Wyddfa itself fills the sky upon the south west, and when the summit of the pass, Gorphwysfa, or "the resting place," marked by a lonely and homely inn, is at length reached, if rest and refreshment could ever be earned it would surely be here. But this indulgence it would be as well to postpone, seeing that a mile's run down, with a drop of 500 feet and a few minutes of back pedalling, lands the traveller at the equally lonely but more capacious, and in its modern fashion quite historic hostelry of Pen-y-gwryd. It has memories of the Kingsleys who have celebrated it in prose and verse, and though universally patronised by passing coaches in the season, still belongs to the order of the snug and friendly Welsh inn as opposed to the caravansary under "English enterprise" where you become a number and are at the mercy of a young woman from Manchester, dressed in the height of second class fashion,

to whom the neighbourhood of Snowdon is an intolerable exile to be counted by days.

For my part I love these old Welsh inns. It takes a vast deal to spoil them. There are not many left, it is true, in the Snowdon mountains, but Pen-y-gwryd, if not precisely a type of those I am thinking of, has, hitherto at any rate, been of the genus. But I know them well, from Aberdovey to Flint and from Aberdaron to Montgomery. Now I do not like your chilly and pretentious coffee room, where you ring the bell for your modest requirements, and sit upon an anti-macassared chair looking at a print of Her Majesty's Coronation till a waiter in a white tie brings your change upon a silver tray. Give to me, ever and always, the snug parlour behind the bar, where the landlady, in the interval of her manifold duties, takes fitful snatches at her needlework, and the local gossips forgather. And Welsh landladies, I may remark, are generally bright and often very clever matrons indeed, and the best of company. Here beneath the time honoured and familiar prints of the old "Sir Watkin" and the late Lord Penrhyn and the Old Maids of Llangollen and a stuffed trout or two, let me eat my noon-day crust and crack my bottle of Wrexham ale, while the metal horse that wants neither ostler, nor food nor water waits patiently in the passage.

The inn at Pen-y-gwryd, with its half dozen wind-swept trees before the door, is an oasis in an indescribably fine wilderness of mountain and moorland. It rests upon the very apex of the ridge that parts the waters going northward by way of the Conway valley, from those that are falling and trickling in every direction from mountain fastnesses towards the west and Cardigan Bay. Backwards we may look down between the long sweeps of Moel Siabod, and the rocky breast of the Glydyrs, to the lakes of Capel Curig glittering in the sun. Ahead of us, and to the west, and far below us, lies glowing in its summer dress the most lovely of the Snowdon valleys, Nant Gwynant. Here as elsewhere, the road is

perfect, and a steady downward slope of three miles might offer much temptation for rapid movement. But to yield in this case would be a scandal and a crime. Of all views of Snowdon this is the grandest. You feel really on intimate terms here with the mighty mass for the first time. You can follow the great bastions it flings so far out to east and south and west, and from their isolated outstanding peaks trace the craggy ridges as they climb upwards along the sky line, to where



Snowdon and Llyn Glaslyn.

the Wyddfa lifts far above aught else its shining precipice. The Nant Ffrancon side is black and terrible. But here, if the sun is shining, a world of colouring lights up the rich mass of varied mountain verdure which fights with rock and crag for every inch of space, and throws into striking contrast the dark hollows that mark the presence of gloomy lakes from here invisible

Beneath us, fed by the stream that like a silver thread winds through the meadows, sleeps the bright and beautiful lake Gwynant. Woods blow all around its shores, while the great spurs of Snowdon rise above to Lliewedd, which is close upon 3,000 feet. For nearly a mile we skirt its shores, longing but fearing to dally. Two or three boats are drifting with the light breeze, and patient anglers are absorbed in the no simple task of capturing short-rising trout on a July afternoon. The stream breaks out again at the foot of the lake, and hurries on its way rejoicing down a lovely and fertile glen, and we after it close beside its banks. A small hamlet, a few farms and well-wooded country houses squeezed between the hills, and the road emerges on the shores of Llyn-y-Dinas, a smaller and not quite so beautiful a lake as the other. Still following the brawling brook once more released, and on a highway smothered somewhat in woods, and overhanging verdure of all kinds, we skim rapidly down towards far famed Beddgelert.

Upon the right rises a lofty, insulated and wooded rock. Let us salute it with due awe. It is Dinas Emrys, whither Vortigern, in despair of making further head against the Saxons whom he had invited to Britain, retired to brood upon his folly and his sorrows, and the remains of the ramparts and walls he raised are still to be seen upon the summit. He had tried in vain, says the old Welsh legend, to found this last fortress of his upon the morass below, and at last the wise men having consulted their oracles assured him the foundations would never stand till they had been sprinkled with the blood of a child born of a pure virgin. This was perhaps a roundabout way of suggesting that a more reasonable building site should be looked for. The much harassed king, however, took it literally, and had what was left of his realm ransacked for the prodigy. Superstition could meet any demand in those days, but as a matter of fact the lady who came forward to oblige his majesty in this particular case had so patent an object in view it seems strange, that even fifth century credulity could

swallow it. This was a vestal virgin who had borne a child to a noble Roman. The child had grown into a youth, but even thus late in the day his mother it seems thought she could do something to save her honour, and was quite prepared to sacrifice her offspring, and concoct a monstrous tale of total innocence and art magic. The youth was no less a personage than the afterwards famous Merlin, "Myrddin Emrys," and he was ordered to be sacrificed.

But when the boy was confronted with Vortigern's wise men, he showed such superhuman sagacity in discourse with them, that they deemed it wise to let him alone, and his life was spared. He it was who persuaded the king to remove his castle to yonder giddy summit of Dinas Emrys, and himself supplanting all the old wizards in Vortigern's confidence, became his chief comfort and support, and began that career of prophecy which has made his name far the greatest of ancient British bards. Here too, says the Welsh tale, he was wont to sit with Vortigern, unfolding to him the future of Britain :—

> "making the mountain gape
> With his most powerful charms, to view those caverns deep ;
> And from the top of Brith, so high and wondrous steep,
> Where Dinas Emrys stood, show'd where the serpents fought,
> The *white* that tore the *red* from whence the prophet wrought
> The Britons' sad decay then shortly to ensue."

Beddgelert lies in a flat of woods and meadows, shut in upon all sides by mountains. It is the junction of three valleys, the streams from two of them forming the river Glaslyn, which rushing down the third through a stupendous gorge winds slowly out over Traethmawr into the sea.

The low lying village, no great height above the sea, although so firmly embedded in the mountains, is almost wholly a tourist resort. Beautiful it cannot help being, where such a wealth of meadow and woodland and sparkling water is overhung on one side by the immense bulk of Moel Hebog, and on another by the Arran spur of Snowdon. But the village and

hotels, though not offensive, are of this century and need not claim attention. Beddgelert, however, in ancient days was always a place of some note. The last Welsh princes, though the story of Llewelyn and the faithful hound Gelert is purely mythical, were continually here, for hunting purposes chiefly, no doubt. There is also a most ancient and curious little church, and as old Pennant says "in a situation the fittest in the world to inspire religious meditation, ancient lofty mountains, woods and murmuring streams." It is said to be the oldest monastic foundation in



The Bridge at Beddgelert.

North Wales except that on Bardsey Island, for Llewelyn the Great in the 12th century found it here and added to its endowment, as did his grandson, the last of the name. It seems to have been a priory of the Augustines, where, both men and women lived, separated by a wall; a piece of ground, now probably built over, having being known as Dôl y Llein, or the meadow of the nun. It possessed lands both in Anglesey and Lleyn, which at the dissolution were granted to the two families of Bodvel and Prydderch.

Beddgelert, the foundation and abiding place of a British saint named Kelert, not the grave of Llewelyn's hound, I regret to say, seeing the hundreds of pilgrims who drop a tear every season on the weather worn stones above the spurious grave, received much attention from Edward the First. It was not only the centre of religion and charity for all these mountains, but lay at that time upon one of the chief highways between



Beddgelert.

England and Ireland, being on that account at considerable expense in the entertainment of travellers. In regard to another class of traveller altogether, and a much more recent one, a curious little book published sixty years ago lies before me. It was written by one Bransley, a schoolmaster in Bangor, and its purport was to puff the hitherto little known centre of Beddgelert, with designs more particularly on the English Universities, whose members were then just beginning to

make themselves felt as an appreciable factor in North Welsh travel. The big hotel at Beddgelert was a new venture, and the author of this brochure was given the run of his knife and fork for his services, and he certainly earned it. Poor Borrow, when he was here a few years afterwards, seems to have sadly run amuck of the company, and lashes out in true Borrovian fashion. "The scum of Manchester and Liverpool, spuddy-faced ugly puppies bedizened with rings," is the best he can say for them. But it is quite easy to see that they, in their turn, found something amusing in the self-complacent Suffolk giant. Hence these ravings. Borrow was at his best in the bar parlour of a country inn. Whenever necessity forced him into the exotic and pretentious house of entertainment his gall rose, and a good many of us, I fancy, are not wholly out of sympathy with him in this particular. The way out of Beddgelert lies along the crystal and foaming waters of the Glaslyn, up which the sewin are already running from the sea, and may be made out by the keen-eyed, lying deep down in the transparent pool, under the foot bridge beyond the church.

The deep cut gorge through which the Glaslyn and the highway, one of the very smoothest bits of road by the way in Wales, escape from the Bethgelert basin to the great sea levels known as the Traeth Mawr, is held to be one of the sights of Snowdonia. As a geological freak the precipitous cliffs, seven or eight hundred feet in height, to which stunted pine trees cling precariously, has no equal in the country. It is in fact a little bit of Switzerland pure and simple, except that the charming river which resounds in the narrow gorge is happily no foul mud-coloured glacier stream, but of a crystal quality even above, if that were possible, the quality of Welsh streams. The scene from the one-arched ivy-clad bridge, Pont Aberglaslyn, flung here across the torrent, is striking enough. It has been written and sung of, painted and photographed by many generations. But for grandeur it is not in my opinion comparable to Nant Ffrancon or the Pass of Llanberis, and it is



Pass of Aberglaslyn.

upon this alone its reputation rests, for there is nothing soft or rich about it.

Once out of the gorge, we are clear of the Snowdon mountains, and a great expanse of lush meadows spreads out towards the sea, distant now some half a dozen miles. For the whole distance the road, always smooth and level, runs under the shadow of wooded cliffs of immense height. But on our left the great low ground reclaimed from the ocean a hundred years ago, and picturesque with furzy commons, bright hay fields and vast pastures sprinkled with black cattle sweeps southward to the oak ridges, beyond which the Dwryd, under the shadow of the Ardudwy mountains, spreads its pleasant streams. All this in the last century was covered with sea water and shifting sands. Small craft plied up here and almost met the Glaslyn plunging down its rocks. There was here too a famous and a royal salmon weir in olden days. Welsh princes held it jealously for their own, use and the English kings as their successors took careful toll of its revenues.

The rod fisher alone now takes toll of the king of fishes, as he passes upwards, and not a very heavy toll at that. This however is taking no account of what wild work is done on winter and autumn nights upon the spawning fish as they lie in the mountain brooks beneath the shadow of Snowdon and Moel Hebog. For the Welsh peasant is the most inveterate fish poacher in all Britain, and being greatly encouraged by the sympathy he too often meets with at the hands of the magistrates and the nominal fines inflicted, he has played sad havoc with many once prolific streams.

CHAPTER XIV

TREMADOC—CLYNNOG

A STRANGE and sudden contrast, after so long wandering in deep or shadowy valleys or looking out over wild mountain tops, are these glowing levels of the great Traeth Mawr. Where once a waste of sand and water stretched from hill to hill are now green commons, ablaze with golden gorse blooms or fat pastures sprinkled thick with black cattle, or yellowing grain fields which catch the westering sun. Through the wide flats to where Portmadoc lies low upon the sea-line and the wooded knolls of Llanfrothen and Penrhyn Deudraeth fringe the Merioneth bank, the Glaslyn steals and winds in deep and noiseless fashion to meet the tide. The sea-breeze comes in fitful puffs, bending the tall bullrushes that flourish thickly along the water's edge, and curling in playful gambols along the placid silvery stream, which for no little distance glistens within a stone's throw of our road. Looking backward across the Traeth, the triple summit and the great humpy sides of Moelwyn and the sharp sugar-loaf peak of Cynicht afford a spectacle that is a long delight to those who pursue this same road in the opposite direction from that which we are now taking: while hanging continually above our right shoulder are the wooded bluffs and craggy limestone cliffs, that are, in fact, the last dip of the Snowdon mountains to where the sea once broke upon their feet.

It is something less than a century since these ten thousand acres, more or less, of fertile land were wrested from the sea,

and the thriving town of Portmadoc, and its smaller and somewhat older neighbour of Tremadoc, were built upon them. Our nimble-minded and prescient friend Sir John Wynn of Gwydir cast his eye, about the year 1600, over these miles of sand and water, and seeing the vast possibilities therein suggested, wrote in upbraiding fashion, as the reader may remember, to his enterprising fellow-countryman, Sir Hugh Myddleton, for expending his fortunes and energies upon other soil. It was reserved, however, for another Vale of Clwyd man, two hundred years later, another scion of that virile Denbigh breed, to make corn and cattle grow upon Traeth Mawr, and to make towns spring from the waves, which should be called after his name. Both of them, too, worked chiefly for posterity, gaining little beside some measure of immortality for themselves. Myddleton certainly lost most of his fortune in founding the New River Company. But that others have reaped where he sowed is amply demonstrated by the fact that a single share in his company is worth to-day some £65,000. As for Mr. Maddox, his long fight with the sea, under much ridicule, no doubt, and much discouragement and financial difficulty, did not bring the reward, I fancy, due to such a work as he achieved and to such risks as he had run.

Just short of Tremadoc we pass below the green and well-timbered grounds of Tan-yr-allt, where stands the mansion that the creator of all this prosperity built and occupied, coming here in the year 1791. It seems a trifle ungrateful that the passing stranger as he pauses to gaze with some pardonable curiosity over the park wall, should, in nine cases out of ten, forget all about poor Mr. Maddox and think only of the feckless poet who is so curiously and in such a strange manner identified with the spot. Shelley's domestic affairs have always had such fascination for so many people that this is perhaps not wonderful. If the whole truth, however, were told, there would be, I suspect, a large majority among the festive folk, who crowd the char-à-bancs and coaches traversing this road in August

that never heard of Shelley and care nothing for Mr. Maddox. But these playful Philistines apart, the poet, I am quite sure, receives much the largest part of that homage which should, perhaps, be fairly rendered to the more practical of the two patron saints. Local tradition takes very little account of him, it is true, and what it has preserved is not flattering or of a respective nature. As for his poetry, have there not been a dozen bards, ancient and modern, reared within sight of the peak of Moel Gest yonder, whose englyns, cowydds and penillion and feats of alliteration would put to the blush any poet who ever wrote in what I lately heard a native enthusiast call the "jingling rhyming English metres?" Seriously though, such scraps of recollection that local people still living have gathered from the lips of those who remembered Shelley, harp chiefly on much carelessness in the matter of his butcher's and his baker's bills. This was exaggerated no doubt by the fact of his being a stranger, and therefore a suspicious character, and, as the natives thought, a madman; for what else could a man be who roamed about the heathery breast of Moel Ddu at midnight without a hat and shot scabby sheep beneath the very nose of their indignant owners, from motives of pure humanity.

Shelley, it may be remembered, came to live here as a friend of Mr. Maddox, whose engineering projects had fired his enthusiasm, and whose cause he aided both by money, circulars, and such interest as he possessed. He was very young, had not long in fact contracted his unfortunate marriage, and his zeal for the draining of Traeth Mawr arose in part, no doubt, from the philanthropic ardour which filled his dreamy soul. At any rate it is tolerably certain that he left a great deal more money in the Traeth than any balance he might have owed to the village tradesmen when he left so suddenly after that weird midnight adventure which has provoked so much interest and controversy among his biographers. The "Tremadoc incident," when Shelley had his midnight fight in the garden with his mysterious assailants, is certainly the event that chiefly connects



Tremadoc, Portmadoc Road.

his name with the place in the minds of most of his admirers. They will remember how he was possessed of the notion that enemies were lurking about seeking his life, and how he astonished his small household by appearing one night from the garden, wounded and bleeding and pistol in hand, having had, so he declared, a desperate encounter in the shrubbery with two armed men. It was the day following this that the poet and his household so suddenly disappeared, removing to Gwynfryn, Mr. Nanney's house near Pwllheli, prior to their permanent departure from Wales. We may leave experts to fall out over the question whether Shelley's mind was at this time unstrung and whether his fight was a delusion, and why it was he whirled himself and his family out of Wales with such mysterious abruptness. It will be sufficient here to say that the house in which he lived has long been pulled down. Mr. Robert Jones (Alltud Eivion), the venerable author of Y. Gestiana, and the historian of Tremadoc and its neighbourhood, remembers it well, he tells me—a stone building with dormer windows, which stood on the road at the village end of the Tan-yr-allt grounds. Some further interest, too, seems to belong to the matter, since Shelley is, I think, the only great modern English poet who ever made a home in Wales.

There is nothing to detain us in Tremadoc. It is a village whose shape suggests that two or three generations ago it hoped, as indeed is actually the case, to grow some day into a town. Portmadoc, but a mile away, with its harbour, its station on the Cambrian, and its light railway, tapping the great slate quarries of Festiniog, strangled such aspirations in their very birth, and its sleepy square echoes with a hollow and cavernous sound as the summer coaches go tooting through it. Roads here, excellent as the one we are travelling on, swing to the left for the coast of Cardigan Bay and the south shore of Lleyn: for Portmadoc, Harlech, and Barmouth, that is to say, on the one hand, and for Criccieth and Pwllheli on the other. We ourselves may keep to the broad highway, which bends round the western

base of Snowdonia, opening out, with a great sense of space and breeziness, the long, low-lying peninsula that stretches for five-and-twenty miles towards the setting sun, and is generally spoken of, though not quite accurately, as Lleyn.

Carnarvonshire might well be likened geographically to one of those quarters into which its lords and princes were so often carved by Norman kings. Snowdonia or Eryri might be the shoulder and shoulder-blade, while the old Cantrefs or Hundreds of Eivionydd, Arfon and Lleyn, form the arm, stretching far out into the Irish Sea, and clenching a mailed fist where the waves roar around the savage and upspringing headlands of Bardsey and Braich-y-Pwll. In Eryri men dwelt sparingly along the sea shore, or led wild lives with their cattle amid the Snowdon mountains, till times of stress, when all North Wales broke in upon their solitude, as to a place of refuge and defence. In the peninsula, on the other hand, population, from prehistoric times, gathered far more thickly, and has left it strewn abundantly with relics that men may only guess at, and as rich in memories of later days that we haply know something of. A turbulent set, indeed, were these squires who clustered so thickly upon the farther side of the Snowdon mountains. Their feuds and factions in the Wars of the Roses and the earlier Tudor period, judging by what Sir John Wynn has actually left us, would, if recorded, have filled many volumes. Some were the descendants of Owen Gwynnedd, some were of the tribe of Colwyn ap Tangno, one of the fifteen noble tribes of North Wales, and though the lines of antagonism did not always keep strictly to these divisions, they were bitter enough, and faction, on family lines more or less, waxed fierce and hot through all this part of the Principality.

But we are not yet quite over into this country. The boundary cliffs of Snowdonia still tower upon our right hand: while upon our left the rich tinted slopes of the isolated mass of Moel-y-Gest between Portmadoc and Criccieth shut out the sea. In the short valley between, up which we are slowly

pushing, woods and meadows and homesteads and country houses form a delightful picture. But having brought Owen Gwynedd again upon the scene, and with much to be said almost immediately anent his combative descendants, I must take the opportunity, as we toil slowly up the steep street of the village of Penmorfa, of unmasking the pretensions of Christopher Columbus. Of all places in the world to suggest such a subject, I am quite sure to most of us the foothills of Snowdon will seem the least appropriate. But any good Welshman will know much better than this. For it is a matter of time-honoured faith in the Principality that Madoc, the son of the famous Prince of Gwynedd, discovered America in the twelfth century, and still more that, he stayed there. I was so occupied during our run in the last chapter down Nant Gwynant with the delights of the environment and with the shade of Merlin, and the troubles of Vortigern, as to overlook the fact, that it was from this sequestered spot the first discoverers and settlers of America went forth, according to Welsh faith, some three hundred years before Columbus was born or thought of.

Madoc ap Owen Gwynnedd, whose portion that famous valley was, grew tired, it seems, of the wrangling of his brothers over their father's domain, and determined to strike out and seek some new country, where peace should reign and elbow room be ampler. So taking with him a hardy crew, he sailed for months over the western seas, and at length found a land where life was easy, and the natives friendly, and the fruits of the earth growing in an abundance such as his fancy had never dreamed of. Madoc was evidently as great a colonist as he was a fearless navigator. For he returned to make known his marvellous discovery to his countrymen, and fitted out more ships and persuaded other adventurous spirits from Gwynedd and Powis to accompany him back across the unknown seas.

Several ships and many of his people sailed with him, so runs the story, on this second venture, and were never heard of again. But Welsh philologists will tell you that Kymric words

exist in the old Mexican tongue, and a tradition which the Spaniards found current in the country that the royal house of Montezuma was founded by strangers from across the sea, has been quite sufficient for some imaginative Cambrian writers to accept as a serious fact its descent from Madoc, the son of Owen Gwynedd. Madoc's adventures, however, are not wholly fairy tales. There is just enough possibility in the germ of the matter, together with certain coincidences in aboriginal America, to have aroused the interest of some Welshmen who are neither fools nor cranks. There we will leave it.

Before passing out of this warm and sunny nook of country, we must drop down from the high road, through steep and bowery lanes, to where the ancient little church of Penmorfa nestles, amid the stir of leaves and song of birds. More than one great chieftain of Eivionydd I could tell of, has been laid here, but it is to a comparatively modern hero that I would ask you to come down and pay your respects, neither more nor less a one than that Sir John Owen of Clenenny, whom we came across at the siege of Conway, treating poor Archbishop Williams with such scant respect. We shall pass Clenenny itself shortly, and in the meanwhile, Sir John and his lady lie here, as they should do, in their old parish church, and beneath a monument which tells us, what needs no telling, namely, that the doughty knight loved his king and his country much better than his life. Sir John was a rich man for those times, and a big man among the Carnarvon squires, and not even old "Blue Stocking" Salusbury, of Denbigh fame, was a stauncher loyalist than he. For his fighting record in the war there is not space. But he alone in North Wales, when all was over, raised again in 1648 the fallen standard of the Stuarts. His struggle was brief enough, for he was soon outnumbered and overcome in a skirmish near Carnarvon, and sent to durance vile in Denbigh Castle, where sixty cavaliers of that neighbourhood made a gallant but futile effort for his deliverance.

Cromwell did Sir John the honour of writing of him as the

most dangerous malignant in Wales ; and thinking the dungeons of Denbigh were not deep enough to stifle his influence and machinations, had him brought up to London and secured in the Tower. Hence he was after a time led out to trial, together with the leaders of the English conspiracy that he had so venturesomely attempted to aid in Wales, namely, the Duke of Hamilton and the Lords Goring, Holland, and Capel. Bradshaw was the judge, and all the leading lights of the Commonwealth party were present in court. All five of the prisoners were sentenced to death, and when Sir John received his sentence he stood up, to the surprise of all, and made a low bow to the court. On being asked the meaning of this superfluous piece of courtesy, he replied that he did so because he felt it to be a great honour that he, a poor knight of Wales, should die for his king in such illustrious company. Strenuous efforts were being now made in court by powerful friends to save the lives of the four peers. But the Roundhead Hutchinson, who was present and sitting next to Ireton, observed that no one said a word for poor Sir John, who sat unnoticed, alone, and apart. He was greatly moved to pity at the spectacle, and addressing Ireton said "that it grieved him to see the interest made for the lords, while this poor Welsh knight hath no one to speak a word on his behalf." He then declared his intention of pleading for Sir John himself, provided Ireton would second his remarks. Ireton consented, and himself "spake so nobly" for the friendless but stout-hearted Welsh gentleman, that his life was spared by a majority of one vote in the council. So Sir John came back to Clenenny, and netted his salmon pools in the Dwyfawr, and bred black cattle, and drank the late king's health, and, let us hope, that of Hutchinson and Ireton, till he died peacefully in his bed, and was laid here under the pavement of Penmorfa church.

A few minutes' run on the Carnarvon road and the ridge is reached, whence we look far out to the westward over the green ridges, the broken picturesque low grounds of the Lleyn peninsula. Here lived those militant gentry, in their

small stone manor houses, whose quarrelsome habits drove John Wynn of Gwydir's grandsire to seek a home among the bandits and outlaws of Dolwyddelan and Penmachno, and to regard them as less dangerous neighbours than his own relations. Here is Clenenny itself, an old farmhouse now, like the rest of them, standing amid trees by the roadside. Just across the fields and tucked under the mountain is Gesail Gyferch, a fine old block of weather-worn stone, some of which has, of a surety, stood here since the Wars of the Roses, and looks all the mellower for the overarching trees that shade the yard and buildings, and the garden greenery that spreads and clambers round the still cheerful face of the rude steep-gabled farmhouse. A wide, green, treeless valley sweeps up from here to the foot of Moel Hebog, and dark clefts in its smooth sides mark the hollow where sleeps the large and gloomy lake of Cwm Ystradlyn, whence issues the brawling Dwyfawr, whose tortuous course through a charming landscape we partly follow.

There too, perched upon its wooded hill, is Brynkir, another name notable in the old-time life and feuds of West Carnarvon. Brynkir is still a country house, but not so Ystymtegid, whose site away beyond the old church of Dolbenmaen, is marked by a bleak farmhouse, of a much more modern date than that to which my thoughts are now reverting. Cefn-y-fan, the chief of all these manors of the sons of Howell ap Meredydd and the race of Owen Gwynnedd, disappeared even earlier, for it was burnt by Glyndwr with such effect that the cinders smoked and the coals glowed, says an old legend, for two whole years afterwards.

But I must cut the list short. These old places have nothing to show the passer-by but rude stone walls ; and to care for them enough to make them speak, you must hang about the neighbourhood for weeks and grope about in plain old churches and churchyards and in curious books, not easy to be got, and gossip with the local antiquary, and try and get inside the tangles of Welsh history and Welsh pedigrees. And this of course no outsider

would take the trouble to do unless he had something of a mania for such trifles. For my part I confess to a weakness for letting my fancy run on such imaginings, and even taking a little trouble to prepare the ground for such excursions of the fancy, though a real Welsh pedigree in manuscript fills my soul with awe and turns me giddy. For the English reader must not suppose the simple record of his own descent that he has perhaps hanging in a frame somewhere, rolled up in a tin box, is upon all fours with an orthodox Welsh pedigree in the matter of lucidity. I remember an old gentleman in the West of England who had spent some years in carrying his ancestry back to a dim period, and when the *magnum opus* was completed he had it embodied in a volume bound in leather with clasps. So much, of course, was harmless, but it became his joy thereafter to carry it round about the neighbourhood to his acquaintances and those who had hitherto been his friends, and force the loan of it upon them. Perhaps he had never been popular, but he had at least been tolerated. When last I heard of him, however, there was every prospect of his becoming in his old age a social pariah upon his native heath, and of his grey hairs going down to the grave without a single note of neighbourly regret. What would have been his fate had his pedigree been a Welsh one, it is ill saying.

But there is no need to understand anything of Lleyn genealogy to take some interest in the goings on of the gentry of this corner of Wales at the beginning of the Tudor period and just before it, as told by Sir John Wynn of Gwydir out of the mouth of his fathers and grandfathers. Of these worthies, though in all conscience no carpet knights, for whom the amenities of Lleyn society had grown too intolerable to bear. Gesail-Gyferch was the chief stronghold. Sir John's great-grandfather Jevan ap Robert was then living here, though in the Wars of the Roses, when Herbert made that famous march to Harlech, he had been compelled, like Glyndwr in still earlier times, to take refuge in a cave on Moel Hebog. At Bron y Foel, which is also



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still standing on the bosky slopes of Moel y Gest, facing Criccieth, lived Jevan's brother-in law Howell ap Rhys, of the rival sept sprung from Colwyn ap Tangno. "Gentlemen in those times," says Sir John Wynn, "kept wine cellars, where nearly every day neighbours met for shooting matches, wrestling, throwing the sledge and drinking *very moderately* not according to healths and the gluttonous manner of our days."

It was on one of such occasions, when Jevan was known to be going from home to shoot a match with his relatives John ap Meredydd's sons (probably at Ystymtegid), that Howell determined to put an end once and for all to this doughty champion of the race of Owen Gwynedd. Having a wholesome awe of Jevan's physical powers, for he was of great stature, and being particularly anxious to a make a clean job of it, he engaged a butcher to ride with his troop, whose orders were to strike Jevan dead from behind as soon as the *mêlée* was in full swing. The butcher was cautioned, however, to keep a sharp look out for little Robin ap Inko, Jevan's foster brother, whose place it was in action to ward off all danger in the rear. And as the troop jogged cheerfully along upon the track of Jevan ap Robert, who had already left home, they came upon his lady, who had accompanied her lord for a short distance upon the road, and was now returning to Gesail-Gyferch. She divined at once the kind of business on which her brother was bound, and implored him to do no harm to her husband, declaring that he for his part harboured no such designs. Howell contemptuously disregarding his sister's entreaties, this valiant lady seized his horse by the tail and clung thereto, being dragged some yards, till Howell drawing his sword and making a vicious cut at her arm, caused her to let go. But even this rough treatment did not daunt the bold Welsh dame, for running forward, she seized the handrail from a footbridge that crossed a stream, and aimed "a mighty blow" at the bloodthirsty Howell. But he was not to be hampered by such trifles, and spurring on with his troop they soon overtook the

unsuspecting Jevan and his friends, and without more ado engaged them in a hot encounter.

It is pleasant to read in Sir John's quaint Elizabethan English that Howell and his friends got much the worst of it, and that the butcher was himself killed by the faithful Robin, and the rest of the party put to flight. "Let us away," said Howell with seemingly poor spirit when he saw the butcher fall, "and begone, for I had given charge that Robin ap Inko should be better looked after."

Gesail Gyferch, like the vanished Cefn-y-Fan, had been burnt by Glyndwr and for the same reason. For two brothers, Jevan and Robert ap Meredydd had owned the whole property in those troublous times. Jevan had stuck to the King, been made Governor of Carnarvon Castle, and died in office. So strong was Glyndwr's faction in these parts, they durst not bring his body across country, but took it round by sea to Traeth Mawr, and buried it in Penmorfa church. The other brother, Robert, clave to Glyndwr, and ultimately came into the estates, and rebuilt Gesail Gyferch. It was probably because there was so much fighting to be had both in Wales, France, and England for the first half of the century, that it did not occur to him to get married till he was nearly 80. But he was even then in time to save the hardy stock from lapsing, seeing that this very Jevan whose prowess we have just witnessed was his son.

The feud continued high between the latter and Howell. Both of them had property in the parish of Llanfrothen beyond Traeth Mawr, but Howell had the larger stake. He therefore took great umbrage when Jevan put a son out to foster, after the custom of the time, with the parson of that parish. It was doubtless a breach of etiquette. At any rate, Howell's wife seems to have been as keen a partizan as her sister-in-law, for she promptly had the parson killed, two of the three instruments of her vengeance flying to sanctuary in the lordship of Chirk. I have before told how that it was the custom, before Henry VIII. completed the settlement of Wales, and put the country

under county government and the king's writ, for lordships to harbour each other's felons, and make money out of ransom, and cherish at all times grudges, and cause much general confusion by their hopeless disregard for the public weal. So the murderers of the Llanfrothen parson fled to Chirk, Jevan and his people, to the number of seven, spurring after them in hot haste across the whole breadth of Wales. They succeeded in capturing the criminals, but even then found themselves in a dilemma delightfully characteristic of the times: embroiled, in short, in the quarrels of two rival dominant families, the Trevors and the Cyffyns. As they had risked the resentment of the Trevors, the more powerful, so they had stirred up the active sympathy of the Cyffyns, and lit the fires of faction by the banks of the Ceiriog and the Dee, where the "crie was raised, the Trevors to their friends, the Cyffyns to their leaders." The latter however had to confess to Jevan that they did not see their way to getting him out of the country with his prisoners, "for the Trevors would be in every pass." So Jevan, to simplify matters, ordered his men to cut the heads off the malefactors then and there. His servants, however, bungled so sadly at the gruesome business that the unfortunate sufferers themselves felt called on to remonstrate, coolly remarking that, if their cases were reversed, they would make a very different job of it. The Squire of Gesail Gyferch then took the matter in hand himself, and, with two deft sweeps of his axe or sword, executed the justice that should have been done in due form at Carnarvon, upon the hills of Chirkeland.

The fun however was not yet over; for, as the party nearing home, were riding along Traeth Mawr by moonlight, the third murderer, who had never left the neighbourhood, rashly shot at them from a bordering wood, whereupon all seven of them fired at a venture into the thicket, and had the good luck to bag the quarry, and so put a satisfactory finishing-touch to the expedition.

Jevan ap Robert, however, according to his grandson, should

have been the last man to complain of the harbouring of llawrudds ("red hands") for his own house was the most popular shelter for them in Eivionydd, and they "lived there royally," particularly, no doubt, those who were looked for by his neighbour of Bron-y-Foel. On one occasion, when Jevan was away at Carnarvon, assisting no doubt in the administration of justice, Howell thought the chance a good one for attacking Gesail Gyferch, and did so in force. "The battle raged," says Sir John, "for twenty-four hours, and the whole country was raised." We have already seen what Jevan's lady could do with a hand-rail, and now, in her husband's absence, she stoutly backed up the efforts of her friends by hurling pailfuls of boiling mead on the heads of the attacking party. At length, from sheer exhaustion, it seems, a truce was made, and Howell went jogging back to Bron-y-Foel with the little outlaw of Llanrwst, David ap Jenkin, whom he had employed to help him, at his side. If such resistance, remarked the sagacious David to Howell, is offered in Jevan ap Robert's absence, what chance would there be of overcoming it when Jevan himself was present? But the last piece of diversion of this kind Howell was to enjoy in Carnarvonshire took place at his own house.

Bron-y-Foel, as I have already implied, may still be seen, and stands near the sea-shore, upon the foot-hills of Moel-y-Gest, doing duty as a very modest farm-house, nor ever, I should imagine, being made an object of pilgrimage by strangers. The quarrel this time arose out of some warm language that the servants of the rival factions had hurled at one another across a salmon pool. The assailant was one Griffith ap Gronow, who seems to have lived at Gwynfryn, beyond Criccieth, now owned and occupied by Sir Hugh Nanney, a descendant of some, at any rate, of the combatants. Griffith had much experience of continental warfare, and, in conjunction with some of the Meredydd faction, now determined to apply his professional experience to the reduction of Howell's stout little manor house at Bron-y-Foel. But the defence was so stubborn that, after burning down

the outbuildings, the attacking party could make no further progress. So they resolved to smoke the old fox, Howell, out, and, piling the remains of straw stacks round the house, there was soon a merry blaze, and so prodigious a smoke inside that Howell's people had to descend into the cellars and climb into the attics, in order to avoid being choked. The Squire himself stuck to his guns, jeering both at his foes outside and his panting friends within, and swearing he had seen "many a bigger smoke than this at the cooking of a Christmas dinner." But even he had at last to give in and come to terms, though not before he had shot Griffith ap Gronow dead with an arrow fired from a window. With all this free fighting the King's law seems nevertheless to have had some vitality, for Howell was carried off to Carnarvon to stand his trial. This seems a little unfair and illogical, but there were wheels within wheels, or, in other words, there were those among his enemies who suddenly remembered a tie of blood, and didn't wish to proceed to extremities. And if he had remained at home his life would not have been worth a day's purchase. An English jury at Carnarvon would be almost sure to let him off, which they eventually did, though not till an immense amount of eloquence had been expended by his advocate, who, strange to say, was of the Gesail Gyferch faction. Getting the prisoner safely through from Bron-y-Foel to Carnarvon, says Sir John, was a difficult business. He was escorted by a great crowd, and companies of men were posted at different points along the road—not, I gather, to prevent a rescue, but rather to prevent this same Gronow's friends taking the law into their own hands. Howell after this never returned to Eivionydd. It was too hot to hold him, though it does seem hard that such a venial offence should have been the undoing of a man who had survived so many inexcusable ones. Thus wagged social life in Carnarvonshire, in times long before tennis and croquet and garden parties provided less bloody diversion.

And all this time we are sweeping round the western base of the Snowdon Mountains towards the north shore, treading

almost on their very toes, and travelling upon a road that gives us at all times a noble outlook, even if some of its gradients are a bit steep, and its bed the roughest, perhaps, we have yet met with. Snowdon itself at such close quarters is invisible; but Hebog and Llwyd, Garnedd Goch and Mynydd Mawr, lay high up against the eastern sky. Quarry villages are sprinkled here and there with some disfiguring effect along their green foot-hills, and from time to time the rumblings as of distant thunder shake the air. Away to the west the long peninsula spreads itself in green billowy ridges, thrusting heavenwards here and there those isolated peaks and humps that are so characteristic of its landscape. The group that culminate in the "Rivals" already looms large and near at hand, while far away on the horizon Bodvean and Carn Madryn lift their misty heads. Just beneath us the clear brown streams of the Dwyfach prattle through treeless flats of bog and meadow, and the soft sea winds, which blow backwards and forwards over Lleyn, are laden just now with the scent of new-mown hay-fields. Perched upon the ridges, or clinging to the slopes, are the same snug homesteads of stone and slate we have seen so much of in Denbigh and Merioneth. Cromlechs and camps, and prehistoric memorials of all kinds, lie so thickly upon this country, I feel more than ever easy in my conscience for steering clear of a subject that is not greatly to my taste. Indeed, the impossibility of being able to do more than index them, which the ordnance maps and guide books have done admirably, becomes increasingly evident and affords me much consolation.

I want to get to Clynnog in this chapter. Now to do so, and keep all the time upon a tolerable road, it would be necessary to continue sweeping round the mountain slopes well-nigh to Carnarvon, before a connection can be made with the excellent highway that runs back along the north shore to Clynnog, and thence across the peninsula to Pwllheli. This entails describing an angle so acute that I should be inclined—

if time were of any moment—to turn to the west at the ugly mining village of Pen-y-groes, and face a couple of miles of somewhat perpendicular lanes, which, dropping into the little valley of the tumultuous torrent of the Llyfni, ultimately lands one far upon the coach road that skirts the northern shore.

Here, as we advance leisurely towards Clynnog Fawr, we may gaze, and from a road that admits of such indulgence, far out over the shining sea, and trace the whole west coast of Anglesey, from the yellow sandy ridges by the Menai's mouth to the bold headland of the Holyhead mountain. Straight ahead of us, and barring our path, springs up the first of that isolated group of mountains known generally as the "Rivals," whose position gives them a distinction far beyond their actual altitude, which is nowhere quite 2,000 feet. Between the foot of the nearest height and the sea lies the little village of Clynnog, which is famous for possessing one of the finest old collegiate churches in North Wales. The fabric, which is cruciform and embattled, dates from the fifteenth century, but it has its roots, like nearly all Welsh churches, in the sixth, having been founded by St. Beuno, who was a cousin of Kentigern, the founder of St. Asaph, and is buried here. He is noted as having raised to life his fair niece St. Winifred, who was slain by Caradoc, a Welsh lord, because she rejected his licentious overtures. The lady, too, about whom there are many well-known legends, is said to have here found a final resting-place. But the story of this old church's foundation has it that King Cadvan granted to St. Beuno a certain tract of land, but when that holy man proceeded to enter into possession, he found a widow with a child obstructing his path, who declared that the land was not the King's to give, but the heritage of the infant she bore in her arms. St. Beuno then returned in wrath to his majesty and, finding the tale was true, heaped every curse of the Church upon his head, though what power he had to do so is not precisely evident. But a cousin of the King's met the angry Saint as he was leaving his Majesty's presence, and, ashamed

perhaps of the meanness of his royal relative, bestowed upon St. Beuno, out of his own lands, the estate upon which Clynnog now stands. Its endowments were increased by grants from time to time by many Welsh princes, Anarawd, who my readers may remember as helping the immigrant Kymri to drive the Saxon settlers from the Perveddwlad, being, in thankfulness for that victory, among the chief of them. "The church that is now there," says Leland, "with cross ailes, is about as big as St. David's, but is of new work. Ye old church where St. Beuno lieth, is hard by the new. This is a greate parish, and the church is the fairest in all Carnarvonshire, or better than Bangor."

The chapel wherein Beuno's dust lies is a much older building, and is connected with the church by a dark and curious cloister. The monument that covered the Saint's grave has been destroyed in quite recent times, but "St. Beuno's chest" remains, a massive case of solid oak, with wondrous locks, that would make, what moderns are accustomed to treasure as old oak chests, look foolish indeed. "You may as well try to break St. Beuno's chest" is an old Welsh proverb. In former days, a cure of ills was supposed to be effected by spending a night upon the tomb of the Saint, and even Pennant in his day found upon the cold stones a feather-bed whereon a paralytic, who had crawled from Merionethshire, had lain all night. Sick children and invalids of all descriptions had been wont to be laid here, rushes being strewn regularly upon the floor for that purpose. All calves and lambs too, born with a particular ear-mark, called "Nod Beuno," were brought here and delivered to the churchwardens to sell for the benefit of the church, the money for this, as well as all votive offerings being dropped into the Saint's oaken chest. In pre-Reformation days, it was a house of the Carmelite friars, and was collegiate, consisting of five prebends. Among its curiosities is a battered stone image of St. Winifred, and a pair of iron "dog tongs" (Gefail cwn), such as I have seen in several old churches in

Wales. These are about three feet long, and enabled the sexton to seize with inexorable and, I should imagine, excruciating grip any intrusive dog that might wander in during divine service. The process of ejectment, however effective, must have paralysed for the time being—one may well fancy—all attempt at praise and prayer.

Old and lofty trees, too, form a pleasing and suitable fringe to the crowded, ill-kept churchyard. Indeed, the fabric itself is ill kept, and, heresy though it may be, I protest I like it none the less for this absence of varnish and restoration. That the congregration is out of all proportion small to the size of the building is obvious at once; but that concerns the parson and the parish and the bishop, and is none of our business. Indeed there is a fine old-world aroma about the inside of this ancient building, set so suggestively between the mountains and the sea, that would certainly be wanting if an abounding congregation expended its well-meant enthusiasm and its offertories upon it. A raised and be-railed tomb of the Twistletons beneath the pulpit recalls our old friend, Sir John Owen, for it was Colonel Twistleton who took that implacable Royalist prisoner, and looked after the Parliamentary interests at Denbigh during the Commonwealth. The Colonel was of a North-Country family, who married into Wales, and repaid the obligation by leaving heiresses only, who married Welsh men—Wynnes, I think,—for this church and neighbourhood are under the sway of the House of Newborough, whose head-quarters are at Glynllivon upon the Carnarvon road. You may also see here some old armorial bearings of families long extinct as gentry, though their homes remain, and also pews, on whose doors are inscribed, since old times, the names of farmers who sit or ought to sit there, with mortuary tablets, two hundred years old, against the wall, proclaiming that the ancestors of the men who worship there to-day, lie mouldering beneath their feet. In the choir, too, are some curious oak sedilia of that kind not often to be found, which required a wide-awake worshipper to

sit in them with safety, being so cunningly contrived as to upset those who yielded to drowsiness or abstraction. There is, moreover, abutting on the churchyard, a very small, but curious old house, with dormer-windows in the roof, which no doubt at some time or other was the vicarage. At a later date, it is said to have done duty as the tavern, which, in the debased period of the Welsh Church, played such a prominent part in the Sunday programme.

For hither the parson, with his churchwardens and other shining lights of his congregation, were wont to retire between the services, and carouse in no shamefaced fashion, while the village boys played ball in the churchyard. This Sunday ball play seems indeed to have been something more than a desultory amusement, for when Dissent began to thrive, there is much evidence that it was a function which it was a point of honour for the parson's party to patronise, and for the other to leave severely alone. The English parson in the Georgian period was too often the reverse of saintly, but his Welsh brother, cut off as he was from all hope of promotion, robbed as a class by sinecurists and absentees and bishops, and coming generally from a lower social grade, was still less clerical in his goings on. "Your uncle was a saintly man indeed," said a very old Welsh peasant to a clergyman of my acquaintance some twenty years ago, alluding to the rector of a Lleyn parish about the time of Waterloo. "I never saw him drunk even on Pwllheli market days." And this, I need not say, was spoken with no intentional satire.

CHAPTER XV

THE RIVALS — PWLLHELI — ABERSOCH — ABERDARON

On leaving Clynnog, we must not forget to look out for St. Beuno's well, whose healing and holy waters still bubble by the roadside, in the same stone-built basin that protected them before parish doctors and patent medicines and education had destroyed the simple faith that crowded to its banks.

A friend of mine, a well-known Welsh antiquary, assures me it was also a *cursing* well, and that he himself has tried and proved its efficacy. For happening to pass that way not long ago during a heated political contest, and being himself an ardent politician, he seized the opportuuity to stop at the well side, and to curse with every solemn and formal rite the local leader of the opposite party. A day or two later when he opened his newspaper he had the satisfaction of reading that Mr. A—— had been seized with a violent cold and was quite unable to keep his political engagements.

As I finished the last chapter with some tittle-tattle about Welsh parsons in darker days, I will venture upon a little tale of what an English divine of the same period, with a doctor's degree, and of sober habits, was capable of. This is the case of Dr. Bowles, who in the year 1766 was presented to the church of Trefdraeth by the Right Rev. Bishop Egerton of Bangor. The narrative is not wholly irrelevant, because the bay of Malldraeth is from here very plainly to be seen upon the coast of Anglesey, and, by going a short distance up the

hill that overhangs our road, the church and village of Trefdraeth, which stands at the head of this same bay, may readily be made out.

Now Dr. Bowles was seventy-two, and could neither speak nor understand a word of Welsh. The population of the parish was about 500, and the church attendance reached the respectable total of half that amount, for Nonconformity was then weak and struggling. Of these 500 souls, five or six, it was said in the evidence, could understand English. Even in those days there seems to have been some kind of a law relating to the cure of souls that were wholly Welsh ones. At any rate there was enough to enable the Cymmrodorian Society, backed by Sir Watkin Wynn to bring a suit in the Court of Arches. This was not possible, however, till Bishop Egerton's nominee had had time to greatly distinguish himself. There is no evidence, and this is perhaps the point of the anecdote, that he either considered himself, or that his patron regarded him, as in any way a square peg in a round hole, and he proceeded to read the service solemnly through upon his first Sunday, in English pure and undefiled, having brought a man from a distance to say Amen, and answer the responses. The congregation, with some credit surely to themselves, sat all through this decorously, till the sermon began. This was a little too much for their patience, and on the suggestion of a leading member they rose and left the church in a body.

On the next Sunday morning, the habit of church going being yet strong upon the parish, there was a fair congregation, though rumours of the projected performance may possibly have leaked out and awakened feelings other than those of reverence. The new Rector proved to be a man fertile in resource and of iron nerve. For having in the meantime discovered that there was a statute, howsoever feebly enforced, which required that he should officiate and perform divine service "in the vernacular language of Wales with a fluent and easy delivery, and a graceful propriety of accent,

and pronunciation," he proceeded to act upon it. Now the Reverend Doctor was as innocent of the Welsh tongue as the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, but he had the Welsh prayer book and Bible before him, and it would not be his fault if he could not qualify as tithe receiver of the parish of Trefdraeth.

It does not require a profound knowledge of the intricacies of Welsh pronunciation to imagine the scene of indecorum that ensued. The Vicar, it is said, carried the matter through to the bitter end, or at any rate till the last Welshman to restrain his mirth or his indignation had fled the building. But the really curious part of the story is to come. The case was brought up in the Court of Arches, and the Vicar actually produced a certificate, signed according to the law's requirements by a parishioner and two churchwardens, that his knowledge and rendering of Welsh was above reproach. The mystery of all this came out in evidence, and showed the Doctor as a man who knew a thing or two, however ignorant he might be of Welsh. Now one of his churchwardens was his son-in-law: so his testimony was explicable enough. The other was one Hugh Williams, a shoe maker, and to him went the Vicar with an order for a pair of shoes, and being a new comer it was not unnatural he should wish to have the full name of the tradesman he was dealing with. So Hugh Williams being presented with a sheet of paper, and not noticing it was folded, readily inscribed thereon his signature and the trick was done. Upon this the Doctor proceeded to the house of a certain Richard Williams asking him boldly to sign a paper without reading it, but pointing to the signature of the churchwarden, as a guarantee of good faith. The unsuspecting Richard complied without hesitation, and the Rev. Thomas Bowles, D.D., was armed for the fray.

The case lasted in the Law Courts for three years, during which period the sheep of Trefdraeth wandered virtually without a shepherd, or with a shepherd that was a wolf indeed and a tough one at that, for Methodism was then not widely

organised, nor had it left the fold of the Church. The ways of Ecclesiastical law are still remarkable, and were then wonderful. The Judge said everything he could think of that was severe. Sir Watkins Wynn and the Cymrodorion Society did all that money and energy could do in the prosecution. But the bishop and archdeacon, having once pronounced the doctor to be a fit person for the presentation, it seems that nothing more could legally be effected, and Dr. Bowles battened on Trefdraeth till a green old age, and died in full possession of its parsonage and endowments. "Wales is a conquered country," said his counsel during the trial; "it is proper to introduce the English language, and it is the duty of bishops to endeavour to promote the English in order to introduce the language."

Anglesey has suffered almost more than any part of North Wales from a past policy, of which the Bowles case is only a flagrant example. A heavy reckoning is being paid of a truth, but a still more singular one is being made, for the latest statistics from Nonconformist sources, show that the chapel attendance of the Methodists and Independents alone, is larger by five thousand than the entire population of the island, men, women and children! It only remains to hope that both these over zealous census-takers, and Dr. Bowles may be forgiven their respective errors. For even in Anglesey the Church people, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Irish of Holyhead, and Non-descripts generally count for something, as the Welsh press have recently with some wealth of humour and much candour pointed out.

But the shadow of the mountains has all this time been deepening over us, and the strips of meadow land, interlaced with stone walls, that holds the sea back from their feet, have been gradually narrowing. Gyrn Ddu and Penllechog, 1,700 feet above our head, have been pressing their rocky ridges in more threatening fashion, with each passing milestone, and now the Rivals, higher still and infinitely more grand, thrust out their grim and naked sides across our path, and bar all thought

of further progress by the shore. This is the gem of all Welsh seacoast scenery. One's thoughts turn instinctively to Penmaenmawr for a comparison, but the seas that tumble at the foot of that mighty cliff are bridled and enchained by protecting headlands and islands, and lose something in the fact. But here there is no horizon but the ocean, and the waves break with the same fury with which they break on Holyhead or Bardsey. There is a loneliness too about this coast of Lleyn that gives an extra touch of awesomeness to a headland so tremendous as is this in bulk and height, and in mien so savage. As at Penmaenmawr, the ubiquitous quarryman has been carving dizzy heights, that the convulsions of nature had left rugged enough, into shapes yet more savage and precipitous. But to get perhaps the full sublimity of this spot, one should approach it when the higher peaks are now looming up and now vanishing behind dark scudding clouds and big seas are rolling upon the rocks below. I know of no other bit of sea coast in Great Britain that makes you feel quite such an insignificant atom as you crawl along just above the shore, which after all is not strange, seeing there is no other of such magnitude short of Ireland and the West Highlands.

The road here has no call, as at Penmaenmawr, to force a painful way around the headland, but swinging sharp to the left and leaving the quarrymen's hamlet of Trevor upon the sea shore, carries us up a long and steep incline till it culminates in the village of Llanaelliaiarn, with the sharp peak of Trer Ceiri rising high upon our right, and upon our left the rocky summit of Penllechog. Homely accommodation of an excellent kind either for the day or night can be had at the Village Inn, and this is a matter of some importance. For though I have set my face against all pre-historic philanderings and speculations, and put all mountaineering exploits outside the pale of this sedate journey, Trer Ceiri must be made an exception. There is nothing like it perhaps in all Wales for arousing one's curiosity about speechless stones, and moreover it is but a

trifling climb, though at the same time commanding an admirable view. It occupies the middle one, both in height and situation, of the three peaks of The Rivals, and signifies without too great license in translation "the seats of the mighty." Its summit is some 1600 feet above the sea, and though, on the Llanaelliaiarn side, sufficiently steep and rugged, may be approached from the other without much tax upon the muscles, and none whatever on the nerves. Here stands perched the most ample, and complete ruin of a prehistoric hill fort, or hill town in all Wales, showing the remains of between one and two hundred stone huts, round or oval, the walls of many of them being still two or three feet high. Vast heaps of loose stone mark the ramparts that enclosed the town. On the steeper sides, one such protection was apparently deemed ample, but upon the western slopes, where attack was easy, three rows of these defences now lie, subsided into chaotic heaps, through which a rank growth of heather, blooms and twines. Antiquaries differ, as is natural, in their views, but the largest school supports the theory, that these hill-top forts were the strongholds of the Irish, who, like the Picts elsewhere, poured over North West Wales after the departure of the Romans. These in their turn had to fight for their lands and lives, when the Kymri from Strathclyde Britain in the sixth century subdued all this country, and drove out or held in bondage its inhabitants, and formed the ruling caste of Wales. If these stone houses were not built then, they certainly belong to a very much earlier age, for the Romans during their stay at Chester, Conway, and Carnarvon, held this region in a state of perfect peace, working the lead mines of Lleyn, and carrying the ore over metalled roads, whose traces may yet be seen, to English seaports for shipment to Italy.

There is a wide outlook from here too, and one of great beauty, for the Snowdon Mountains and the long undulations of Eivioneth that roll toward their bases captivate the eye, and hold the interest upon the one side, while to the west, the ridges and satellites of the Eifl group make a fine heather-clad

foreground, over which you may catch glimpses of blue uplands far away, whose nearer acquaintance we shall make before this chapter is finished. A winding road can be seen in the hollow below, making its way through the wild passes towards Nevin, where Edward the First held a great tournament in honour of the conquest of Wales, to which the chivalry of England, and even of Norman France, flocked with much pomp and splendour. Nearer to us again than this, and in a deep valley open only to the sea (Nant Gwrtheyrn), Vortigern is supposed to have ended his days, a stone coffin containing a skeleton, which was taken from a tumulus in the last century, being all that was needed to endorse the ancient tradition that the unhappy King of Britain here died a lonely death, beside the roar of the waves, and amid the cry of sea fowl.

But we must hasten our descent from here, an operation which takes but little time in spite of the height and before taking to the new road again, and turning inland, take a look inside Llanaelliaiarn's ancient church. I should, by rights, have asked the reader when we were at Clynnog, which is the first and the greatest of them, to prepare himself to regard all the churches in this remote peninsula, however humble, with some special interest, and to think of the region as one, where in the sixth and seventh centuries, immense missionary zeal was being expended. For saints poured in here thickly from Brittany and Ireland, building cells and churches all along both the northern and the southern shore. The first of these, and the first in all North Wales was the abbey founded on the small and stormy island of Bardsey or Enlli, at the far end of the promontory. The destruction in 622, of Bangor Iscoed, near Wrexham, one of the greatest houses in Britain, by the Saxons, sent refugees from that noted massacre flying in panic to this remote sanctuary, in such numbers as to add to the importance it had already acquired. The very reasons indeed that now make localities remote were sometimes in ancient days the cause of contrary conditions. Here, for instance,

Wales extended a hospitable hand far out into a sea that had greater terrors than it has for us, and it was eagerly clutched by the wandering saints and missionaries from the west, who braved the waves in fragile craft, and were glad enough to beach them on the sandy coves of Aberdaron and Porth Nigel, and Abersoch. And Ynys Enlli, with its monastery became, above them all, a harbour of refuge, a sanctuary, and a mother of churches, dotting the coast of West Carnarvon, both north and south, with small shrines of stone and wood or even wickerwork, to be replaced in later days by walls more durable.



The Rivals from a distance.

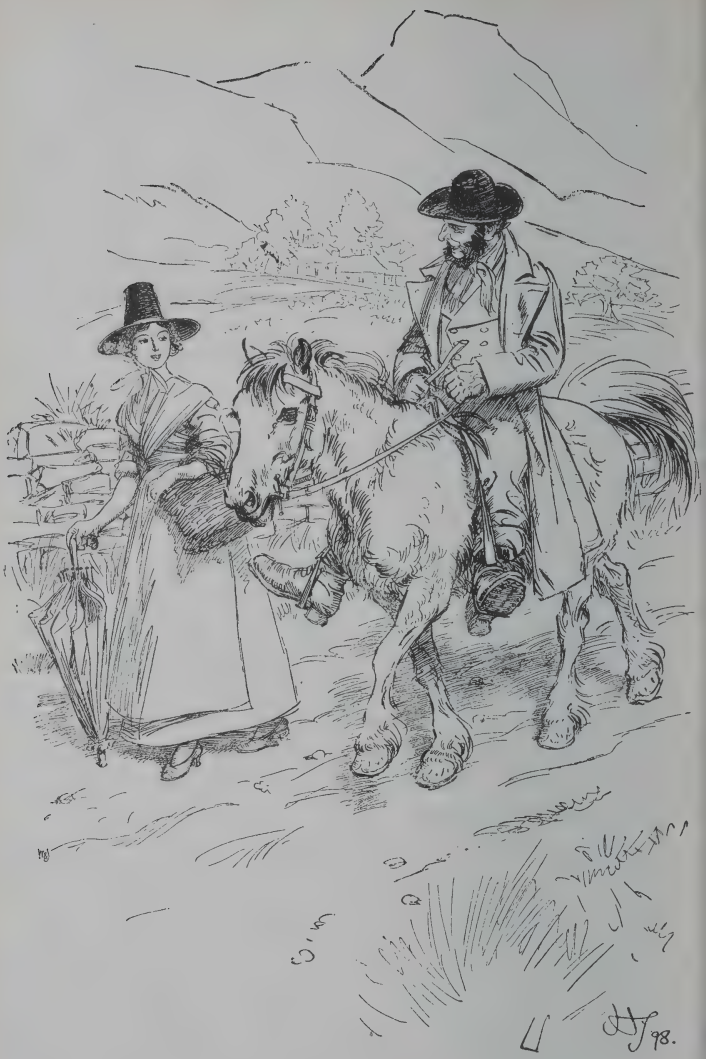
Still more, however, was it as a place of pilgrimage that the island abbey became celebrated. Cures of body, and mind, and soul were to be had upon this lonely storm-washed rock. Above all it was a good thing to die here, and for generations, probably for centuries, men from all parts of the west limped and crawled and dragged themselves along the rude roads of Lleyn. Every church, upon both shores, became a shelter and a refuge to the pilgrims. Their endowments were charged with the task of providing food for those who came or went. By some legal oversight the farm of Pistyll, near Nevin, to this day

goes tithe free, in consideration of furnishing provisions for this astonishingly obsolete purpose. Clynnog was the first stage from Carnarvon, and Llanaelliaiarn the second. Where the original walls of these old Lleyn churches in part or whole, survive, they are often scarred with the writing, and even with the rude illustrations, of the early British pilgrims, who sought passing shelter within them. Llanaelliaiarn, for example, was found covered with such inscriptions when the walls were scraped for its restoration not long ago. It is a cruciform church with oak rafters of unknown antiquity, some sedilia with fixed seats, and a rood screen of the fifteenth century, covered with many quaint devices. The old pews have been faithfully copied in the restoration and are framed not of solid wood, but of slender graceful rails, and this together with two churchwarden's chairs perched high, like thrones, upon either side of the aisle give the old building much originality. There is an old stone too, which the vicar greatly cherishes, bearing a Welsh inscription of unknown date signifying "This is my seat and my grave."

But this will never do; we have to get across to Pwllheli, eight miles from sea to sea and have left very little space for the journey. It is not an eventful one in the way of landmarks that would tell on paper, though I have myself a great affection for this breezy open land of Lleyn; so full of simple rural humanity, so happy, so productive, and yet so far removed from the commonplace rectangularity of the greater part of its sister region of Anglesey. Its aloofness from the world strikes you more even than does this other one. There are no longer any pilgrims, and it is on the road to nowhere. There is the same breadth of outlook as in Anglesey, almost the same scarcity of woodland and of country houses, while the small, well-housed farmer lies as thick upon the land, though his industry is more harmonious with nature and less aggressive. But there are more rough corners here, and more commons, more gleams of gorse and heather, more groves of beech or fir sighing inconsequently by the road side, more cairn-crowned

hills, leaping up here and there in disconnected fashion amid the tumbling ridges of grain and pasture, and the network of straggling banks and grey stone walls. Oak forests and far reaching turbaries once made great inroads upon the peninsula. But of the former no trace is left, and of the latter, no great amount. There is, indeed, a flavour of Ireland in most parts of West Carnarvonshire : not that is to say of Connemara or Donegal nor on the other hand of Carlow, but of the average south-midland Irish landscape. The white-washed homesteads lying on the slopes, the long, low browed thatched one-storied cottages thrust upon the road side, the heaps of turf drying on still lingering patches of bog, the whiff of peat fires wafted from cottage chimneys, the geese cackling on the roadside common. But it is a thrifty Ireland. Back rents have never had to be written off in Lleyn, nor have they gone much up or down in the last forty years in spite of competition for farms being as keen here as in any part of Wales. Yet there is after all a greater gulf set between a Carnarvonshire squire and his tenantry than is the case with an average Irish landlord. The latter, like his tenants, though of a different degree is essentialy an Irishman, and shares with them to some extent even the dialect of the English language they both speak. But the Welsh squire, though he be in direct descent from Owen Gwynedd himself, is practically an Englishman in every detail, and with few exceptions neither speaks nor understands the language of his people.

But rents are paid, I fancy, in Lleyn as punctually as in any part of Britain. There are plenty too, of these rent-payers upon the roads this time of year, jogging along on rough-coated ponies, or driving their women kind to chapel meetings in spring carts, or travelling afoot behind small flocks of mountain sheep, or bunches of black bullocks, to Criccieth or Pwllheli fair. There are more people than common astir in the fields, for the migratory labourers have come in for hay and harvest and turnip hoeing, and much grumbling there is too among



Welsh Gossips of the Olden Time.

the farmers at the wages they demand, and what is more, succeed in getting. But whatever foregrounds you may have in Lleyn, and these are varied, and often delightful, there is always the incomparable background upon the east of the Snowdon Mountains. And as we begin to drop down gradually to the low coast line at Pwllheli, the country grows more luscious, and the lanes leafier, till the blue sea glittering for some time shyly through avenues of oak and ash, at length spreads out before us and in less than no time we are bumping along the somewhat rough Macadam that merges into the narrow main street of the capital of Lleyn.

If there is anything to be said about Pwllheli, I must reserve it for the next chapter, as we shall make a start from there. It will be sufficient for the present to take note that the little branch line from Afon Wen, of which it is the terminus, is the limit of the railroad system and that public conveyances of various sorts, ancient and modern, ply along the only two good roads that traverse Lleyn. One of these turns sharply to the right, a mile beyond the town, and crosses the Peninsula to Nevin ; the other sticking as near as it can to the south shore, lands the traveller comfortably at Abersoch in seven miles. After that the Principality, in the capacity of a host, washes its hands of him, and he must take his chance, and his choice of the various byeways that satisfy the local needs, if he would get to Aberdaron. This is our intention, so the latter of these two roads will be our line.

The sea coast for another four miles is a dead level, the waves falling upon firm sandy shores and green meadows, making a broad band of bright colouring between them and us, as the road hugs the rising ground behind. Beyond the meadows, alive here with black cattle, busy there with hay-makers, the low sand hills gleam, and beyond the sand sparkles the summer sea. So much, however, you might have in Norfolk, or any where. But I do not know how far you would have to search for such a background as is here. For beyond the green and

gold of the shore and the infinite blue of the sea, and at no great distance, the whole sea coast range of Merioneth lays its peaks against the sky, and merging as the eye travels northward, in the Snowdon Mountains which are still nearer and loom still bigger, makes a wondrous panorama. I do not know the Bay of Naples, and so am mercifully spared any temptation to drop into that trite comparison, which is often made here. But I would respectfully urge the Globe-trotter, familiar with most countries but his own, to reserve his scorn till he has stood here, let us say upon a summer's afternoon, when storms have cleared the sky and atmosphere, and bared every crag and peak and mountain slope to the glow of a westering sun.

Cader Idris with its three peaks lies there, and Diphwys over Barmouth, and the whole range of the Rhinogs, with their blunt upstanding heads and serrated ridges, dropping to the Ardudwy coast, where a grey blur, just lifted above the sea line, marks the hoary walls of Harlech. Valleys and estuaries seem from here of no account, and make but slight rifts in the high line of mountain tops which go leaping northward from point to point, till the Wyddfa of Snowdon puts a fitting crown upon a scene that is far beyond any feeble words of mine to paint. I wonder how many people, speaking relatively, know that there is such an outlook as this in South Britain. Wales is hopelessly unfashionable. That portion of the travelling public, who are best equipped, at any rate, to feel and enjoy the beauties of nature, go almost everywhere else. To nine such out of ten in the south of England it is a terra incognita. I suppose it is too near and too accessible. People think they can see it any day, with the inevitable result. But a fraction, however, of even those who do know Wales have any notion of what a sight there is to be seen from almost any spot of the southern shore of Lleyn. When the sun shines all day long from a cloudless sky, and sets in the same gorgeous splendour every night, it is just conceivable you might tire in course of time of the most majestic outlook. But here in these vapoury latitudes it

is not every day but every hour, for the most part, that the face of nature changes, sea, sky, and mountain reflecting her restless moods with infinite beauty and variety.

It is not far from here that Mrs. Thrale was born. Her father, who I trust it will be remembered, was a Salusbury, owned the manor of Bodvel, now a farmhouse, upon the Nevin road. Just beyond it is Bodvean, a seat of the Newborough family, surrounded by ancient timber. I may seem perhaps to notice with some superfluity of detail these country houses. But country houses in Lleyn are scarce, as well as being for the most part landmarks of prodigious antiquity, and nearly all have histories, for you may follow their owners back through the lists of county sheriffs to the times of the Plantagenets, and only stop there because the record stops. The smaller of the two manors just mentioned reminds me that there were once Bodvels of Bodvel, and on this unimportant fact may be appropriately hung a little tale concerning Welsh nomenclature in general. Now surnames, like nearly everything else that is modern in Wales—or North Wales at any rate—began in the days of the Tudors. Till then a man's name, so far as anything legal or official was concerned, was his pedigree, or a considerable part of it. In everyday life your country squire was John ap Meredydd, with a nickname perhaps to distinguish him from other John ap Meredydds. But in public he was John ap Meredydd ap Owen ap Rhys ap Mereddydd ap John, and so forth, the repetition of names in the same line making confusion worse confounded to any modern with a taste for excursions into Welsh social history. This sort of thing could not go on when life got more elaborate, but it was not easy to break a primitive custom so deeply interwoven with family pride.

It was a judge of assize, it is always said, who initiated the revolution in these matters. A testy person, exasperated beyond endurance by the wearisome process of reading out jury lists according to the time-honoured custom of Wales.

Gentlemen might take their first name or their last, he did not care a button which, but so long as he lived to travel upon circuit, the juries he swore should leave all their names save one, outside his court and waste his honour's and his majesty's time no more. This was no doubt but an incident in the general revolt that banished the *ap* or the *ab*, and left the owners of a language full of resonant and melodious words to a nomenclature that is practically limited to a dozen by no means euphonious surnames. This limitation has been, of course, the subject of immemorial jest on the part of the Saxon, for which Jesus College, Oxford, is a popular arena. But for once even humour hardly exceeds the truth, as may be readily seen by a glance down the voters' lists on the door of any country church in North Wales. When the North Welsh gentry too have English names, it has nearly always come by marriage into the family, and rarely, except in a few conspicuously modern instances, by an English purchaser.

It is a thousand pities the Welsh landowners rejected the advice of Henry VIII., who in his general reconstruction of Wales urged them to assume the names of their manors, after the French and English fashion. The notion doesn't seem to have recommended itself to them in the least, and the fact of a mere handful adopting it, then or soon afterwards, gives their names a strange, unnatural look on Welsh records. They are like curious stamps or coins that were issued under peculiar circumstances, and passing quickly out of circulation are treasured by collectors upon that account alone. The Bodvels of Bodvel, the Cerregs of Cerreg, were among the families of West Carnarvonshire who took the hint, then or afterwards. The more distinguished Vaughans of Nannau in Merioneth must temporarily have made some move in that direction, for the Nanneys of Gwynfryn near Pwllheli owe their name no doubt to that famous house. Away from the influence of the English border and the Vale of Clwyd, which was a country to itself, I can only find just enough instances of this compliance

to emphasise its rarity. And this after all is somewhat singular for in modern times necessity has forced the name of the manor, the farmhouse, and even the country town villa into infinitely greater prominence than is the case in England. Lloyd of Tygwyn or Jones of Brynmawr would be the ordinary everyday fashion of alluding to a squire or a farmer in North Wales, and it goes even lower. But there is never the faintest inclination, as in the greater part of Scotland, to drop the patronymic, and to call a man after the name of his place alone. It is quite common, however, to hear a person spoken of as Gwr or Gwraig Brynmawr, which is to say, the husband or the wife of Brynmawr, or whatever the name of the place may be.

Four miles west of Pwllheli, our easy sea-shore route is brought to an abrupt conclusion by the headland of Llanbedrog, which, clad with heather and faced with steep cliffs, leaps for nearly a mile straight out into the sea. In the angle thus formed and amid a wealth of foliage, we leave, as we turn sharply inland and up a steep hill, an ancient church kept and cared for in a fashion that tells of strong and fostering patrons. Our road haply turns to the westward before it has climbed quite up to the village of Llanbedrog, which lies upon a road called Pig Street, a name that upon the ordnance map has of a truth a most alien and lamentably vulgar look. Lleyn being noted for its swine, one might excusably infer that Birmingham pig buyers had forced this unspeakable name upon the village, as cockneys for instance have vulgarised Yr Eifl into the Rivals. Fortunately the Rev. J. Daniells, the antiquary, historian and philologist of Lleyn lives here, upon this very road, and comes to the rescue in most unequivocal fashion. Pig Street is in fact Pig-ystryd, the ystryd or street being here the Roman road which led to the mines beyond Abersoch, and "pig" a familiar Welsh word meaning the head or terminus and nearly equivalent to Pen. How is it, by the way, that a great majority of the Welshmen who bring scholarship and love and

culture to bear on the past of their country, belong to the much abused and so-called unpatriotic and denationalised Church of Wales? According to popular notions this is surely a paradox! With some very notable and brilliant exceptions, in almost every district I can think of the person who has most busied himself in these concerns, whether gentle or simple, lay or clerical, belongs to the "alien church." I asked a well-known Methodist minister how he accounted for this. He admitted the fact at once, remarking with some fervour that Welsh Nonconformists had happily outgrown an interest in such superstitious times, implying very strongly that they had more serious things to think about.

As no comment upon this point of view is necessary, we will hurry on down the neck of the promontory, where, hidden for a time from the sea in a narrow pass, "the Neck of Lleyn," we must content ourselves with roadside objects, which are fair enough. Here is an old one-storied cottage, its thatched roof laden with ferns and mosses, and its long, low, walls bright with a dash of blue and saffron, and its wicket gate opening on a steep paddock, where grey slabs of rock and emerald turf catch the sunbeams that find their way through the leaves of gnarled apple trees. Here, shading our road, is a wood of ancient beech trees, dark as night and silent as the grave. There, upon our other hand, facing the south and the sunshine, is a hillside clad in fern from base to summit, where hardy Welsh ponies and a goat or two are wandering, and thrushes singing in the scattered thorn trees. The little Bay of Abersoch, where the high road once more meets the sea, is as delightful and sequestered and sunny a bit of sea-shore as there is in all North Wales. The headland of Llanbedrog, that we have just circumvented, shuts out the east. The long Cape of Penkilan, with the green islands of St. Tudival floating off its point, breaks the force of both wind and sea upon the west. Between them is a circular sweep of firm yellow sand, upon which tiny waves are rippling to-day with a scarcely

audible voice. Touching the sand, and rolling backward, unbroken by fence or wall, to the high road, is a waste of sheeny bracken, while in the further corner the little trout stream of the Soch, after long and tortuous wanderings through the pleasant meads of Lleyn, ripples out of the bushes into the mimic harbour, on whose wooded slope the village stands.

Upon the right, just before reaching the village, stands amid tall trees, Castell-March, an old manor house, another relic of the vanished squirearchy of Lleyn, and still possessing an interior suggestive of its ancient splendour. I have heard a strange tale relating thereto, which may be worthy of mention, and ran much as follows. Towards the end of the 17th century there lived here a certain knight, Sir William Jones, and like many jovial squires of that day he was upon most admirable terms with the smugglers that plied their trade right merrily upon this sequestered, indented coast. Now in his day there was a particularly daring gang who were accustomed to run their cargoes ashore under the headland of Llanbedrog, and were even suspected, at times, of being something more than smugglers. With these other matters, however, the good Sir William, J.P. and D.L., had nothing to do, but his dealings in the matter of brandy and French wines were continuous and confidential. Now it happened that the squire, who was an easy-going man chafed much under the dominion of an over-zealous and strong-minded domestic. He had dismissed him from his service again and again, but his faithful butler treated the matter as a joke, and at last the poor Sir William arrived at such a state of submission that he could no longer call his soul his own ; the burden had grown too intolerable to bear. At last, while turning and twisting in his mind various plans for regaining his freedom, a brilliant idea struck the knight, and upon the first opportunity he sought an interview with his friend, the captain of the smugglers' vessel, and asked him in confidence what his price would be for ridding him for good and all of his officious dependant. The smuggler named

the figure, and it was agreed that he and his men should come to Castell-March at night, seize, bind and gag the butler, and carry him off to the South of France—or anywhere.

This proved as may be imagined a very simple affair, and went off quite smoothly, leaving Sir William once more master in his own house and prepared to enjoy life again. But the cruise of the smuggler was a long one, and the force of character which had asserted itself in the pantry, began gradually to show itself upon the ocean. To shorten our story, before the end of the long journey was reached, the abducted domestic was such a popular and useful man on board, that all thoughts of landing him were abandoned, and he was sworn in as a member of the gang. Other business, perhaps of a more profitable and questionable kind than smuggling, kept the vessel away from the Bay of Abersoch for a year or two, and in the meantime the outraged butler had become a leader among his companions, and now felt prepared to execute a dark design that had been his consolation, no doubt, through many a long night watch. This was no less than to carry off Sir William in the same fashion that he himself had been spirited away. The job was executed as neatly as the other had been; the squire was seized, gagged and bound and carried off in the night to the vessel, and when morning broke found himself looking sadly upon the vanishing coast of Lleyn from the deck of the smuggler, and once more under the sway of his old butler, only upon infinitely worse terms. History does not say how long Sir William was compelled to exchange the joys of hunting hares on the Llanbedrog hills, and getting drunk at Pwllheli market, for a life on the ocean wave in a smuggler sloop. But I understand that he saw a good deal of the world, the watery part of it at any rate, before his evil genius considered that he had expiated his crime, and restored him to his friends and fireside and his bullocks. Even then a considerable sum of money was exacted as ransom, and so thoroughly frightened was the doughty knight by the whole

adventure that he removed to Carnarvon where he spent the remainder of his days safe beneath the shadow of King Edward's Castle from the buccaneering butler.

Abersoch is the *Ultima Thule* of exploitation in the tourist sense. Oxford if not Cambridge have found it out, and a few Welsh families of discretion make it their summer retreat. Good roads too here cease, though the one upon which the mail cart travels the ten miles to Aberdaron, and that we must



Abersoch.

follow, is not wholly bad, and is perfectly feasible for cyclists. The headland that runs out from Abersoch to Porth Ceiriad is nearly three miles long, and not very much less in width—a large plateau, covered with small farms, which drops down into the sea upon three sides in sheer cliffs. The outlook from it is glorious, whether westward, along the rocky coast to where Bardsey lies, like a huge seal with head erect, in the sea, or eastward over Tremadoc Bay and that incomparable panorama of mountains I lingered before as we left Pwllheli.

But our road, as at Llanbedrog, goes twisting inland in its efforts to get over the ridge, of which the great promontory to the left is the ultimate expression. This surmounted, the hamlet of Llanengan lies beneath us, with its fine church, second only to Clynnog in size and historic interest. There is a magnificent screen and rood loft here, and a fine tower, from which bells of great age, and notable sweetness, fling their chimes over a curving bay, whose terrors for the mariner have earned for it the ominous name of "Hell's Mouth." One of them is called "The silver bell," and tradition says they came from the old monastery on Bardsey. There is an old stone too, near the base of the tower, on which a significant inscription may be read, "I Einion King of Wales built this church to the glory of the eternal judge." Now Einion was a saint and prince of the sixth century, contemporary with the founder of Clynnog and a score of other saintly builders.

We are upon the track of the Romans, too, who mined for lead in Penkilan, as well as of the pilgrims who gathered here for their final stage to Aberdaron, which lies behind the dark ridge of the Rhiw mountain, that lifts itself so finely yonder above the level meadows of the Soch. We might stick to this southern shore, and climb it, saving thereby a mile or two. But for comfort it will be better to keep to the route of the mail cart and telegraph wire, which here links the land's end with civilization. In so doing we must bend inland, following, more or less, the rich meadowy valley through which the little trout stream rolls with gentle current, and waters land "as fine as Dyffryn Clwyd." There are a few big farms in this out-of-the-world spot, and many heavy black cattle that tell their own tale are fattening on the levels. The ridge we have just come over runs almost across Lleyn, and we have it all the time upon our right hand as we head toward the north shore, with a view of circumventing the far shoulder of the massive block of Rhiw. To the right too, its thick woods filling a pass through the low bare hills, is Nanhoron. Edwards live there now, but the sons

of Howell Dda, the peaceful law-making King of all Wales, dwelt here in the tenth century. Carn Madryn, the seat of chieftains in still earlier times than that, lifts its green sides and rocky crown 1,200 feet or more above the level we are travelling upon, and the more recent habitation at its feet, now this long time owned by Jones Parrys, has contributed notabilities to Carnavonshire for as long as the records of Gwynedd carry us back. To complete this trio of country seats lying so far out of the world, is Cefn Amwlch of the Wynn-Finches. But the greatest owners in this Lleyn country, as in the county generally, are Lord Penhryn and Mr. Assheton Smith, who are absentees in so far that their abodes, as we have seen, are in the Bangor district.

Now if one set of people more than another in North Wales can be said to have been wholly sufficient unto themselves, it must be these farming and fisher folk of Lleyn. A look of thrift and humble comfort reigns everywhere, from beside the briery hedges and flowery lanes of the lower levels, to the bare white homesteads that gleam amid the tracery of stone walls upon the green hillsides. It was not always so. Pennant tells a different story; but then the standard of those times was different. Camps, meini hirion, and cromlechs would keep the student of such things busy here for days. Strange things have been once upon time done in this strange windy country. What is now an *Ultima Thule*, a thousand and two thousand years ago, was a land trodden and retrodden by the feet of strangers from every shore of the Irish Sea, and far beyond it—missionaries, hostile invaders, pious pilgrims. Every church recalls some Celtic saint, and marks a stage upon the pilgrim track. The peasants' ploughs have turned up human bones in great abundance, and stones, with brief announcements on them such as would tantalise worse laymen, even than we are, in such matters. "Senacus P. R. S. B. Hic jacet cum mullitudine" may be read upon one at Cefn Amwlch; on another "Meracius P. B. R. Hic jacet." Fields, too, as elsewhere tell

forgotten stories; "Cytiau Cenawon," lairs of the young wild beasts; "Bob gadl," the place of the army; "Tyddyn maes y Frwydr," the farm of the field of battle; "Rhyd y Clawddy," (Clafdy) the ford of the infirmary.

Sarn Melteyrn should be taken note of as the last place where a modern pilgrim can not only get reasonable refreshment, but homely accommodation, if benighted. It is also a place that once enjoyed some ecclesiastical distinction. The sources of the Soch too are here, and mounting a long hill, from its now narrow valley there is a five mile run along a high, bleak, thickly populated plateau, with the sea no great distance off upon either hand, while the road is the best since Abersoch, and a really good one. The hay crop is late on these uplands, the people are busy in every field, and the sun and the sea-breeze are hastening their endeavours. A great hay country is this; and black cattle and white pigs go out of it in large quantities every year. Long ago there were some small squires even out this far, but their houses and their tombs in the churchyards are all that is left of them. It is needless to say there is no English, except by accident, outside the village inn and the village shops, and not always there. There should surely too, one would think, be a special dialect of Welsh belonging to such a region as this. It would seem unnatural that the men of Flint or Denbigh should be indistinguishable in their speech from the men of Lleyn to the experienced ear. Nor indeed are they. Every one knows that the Welsh of South Wales is very different from that of North, and North Walians do say that the parsons who come in such numbers from the South prefer to talk English if feasible, lest they should be laughed at for their accent and other eccentricities of speech. But this is of course merely the pleasantry of a North Walian, who claims that his tongue is the right one. Cardiganshire however, which is an unadulterated and remote county, makes a counter claim for this honour, though the other southern counties are too bilingual to be

considered in the running. But even in North Wales those thoroughly conversant with the language can detect a man's district from his speech, though except the general distinction between North and South there is of course nothing approaching the divergence of English dialects.

Nowhere, even in Wales, are there thriftier, harder working and more independent farmers than those of Lleyn. The women milk the cows, make the butter, and look after the marketing of lesser products, and work in the field in hay and even harvest time. The men do all the outdoor work, only hiring labour, which as elsewhere in Wales is scarce and dear, when absolutely compelled to. Farmhouse fare is of a notoriously Spartan kind all over North Wales, and nowhere more so than here. Fresh meat is rarely tasted. Here, as elsewhere, it is customary to kill the least marketable beast upon the place, a dry cow or a venerable bull, and put it into brine for the year's supply of meat. Pieces are then cut off it from time to time by the careful housewife, and used to strengthen or subsidise the staple dishes of the table. In nine farmhouses out of ten in Carnarvonshire the menu will be much as follows. For breakfast, barley bread and buttermilk; for dinner, potatoes and buttermilk, with a piece of salt meat from the brine pot; for tea, bread with butter or cheese, while porridge and buttermilk are served for supper when the day's work is ended. With slight variations, notably the introduction of bacon, this programme would apply to most farms of North Wales. Nor does greater prosperity in this particular class induce to greater luxury of living. Habit is second nature in appetite as in other things, and moreover the custom of such labour as is employed sharing the family meals conduces to a general level of exceeding frugality. Men who pay from £50 to £150 a year in rent, and are content to live like this, and give the labour of themselves and their families, to say nothing of a few hundred pounds of capital to the land, would

have a right to grumble if they could not put something in the bank at the close of every year. Otherwise their compensations, compared to those of other traders and toilers who provide labour as well as capital would be ridiculously disproportionate to their efforts and their risks. It is quite certain they cannot be as prosperous as they were, for the times have not been good for small cattle breeders of late. The price of wool too has for a generation been low, while that of mutton except on butchers' bills fluctuates amazingly. The big graziers are better off. If they have to sell cheap, they can also buy cheap, but the small farmer's cow will only drop one calf a year, and that calf takes as long maturing for the grazier as it did when it fetched twice the price.

Still the black cattle of Lleyn are greatly valued by Leicestershire buyers, and Lleyn landlords, though fortunate like other Welsh landlords in having this class of tenant, are generally fair and just men. Nobody denies that it is a pity neither they nor their agents, with some exceptions, can speak the language of the country. It is a real disadvantage to a small farmer not to be able to converse with his landlord except through an interpreter. This might seem at first sight a small matter, but in the peculiar relations of landlord and tenant it is surely nothing of the kind. Nor is an imperfect smattering of English much better ; and as there is no prospect within measurable distance of time of the tenantry of North Wales, as a body, speaking anything intelligibly but Welsh, it is not surprising that many young men of the landed interest are beginning to think it is about time to learn the language of the people among whom they are going to spend their lives, and who are their partners, so to speak, in business. If they flinch from the task themselves, it would be at least a simple one for their children, provided that the land agitator and the church disestablisher can be for so long defied. One thing at any rate is a generally accepted axiom, namely, that no one who

cannot speak Welsh can ever hope to really get at the hearts or win the allegiance of the Welsh people.[1] Knowing this full well, and reading the signs of the times, one would have supposed that the course of the future squire, or future agent, or of those responsible for them, was as clear as daylight. Let us hope it is, and that the mistakes of the past in this matter will not be repeated. In former days there was more excuse, for educated Welshmen had not as yet fully realised that the efforts made to stamp out the Welsh tongue were a hopeless failure. Even now most Englishmen think of it in vague fashion as a declining dialect. Fifty years ago and less, the Welsh gentry themselves did not count upon such vitality. All schools were taught in English, and the English bishops were doing their utmost and of set purpose to destroy the language. The obligation, therefore, to acquire it may well have seemed less. Now, however, that the fruitless struggle has been abandoned, it is wholly another matter, and let us hope it may be so regarded.

But here just below us is Aberdaron, the remotest village in all Wales. It is but a fishing hamlet, old and grey and picturesque, and stands upon a sandy cove facing the south. Rugged rocks and sharp cliffs guard each point of the bay, and a small stream comes prattling through the village street into the sea. For primitive simplicity the place is worthy of its situation, and the little inn is in keeping with the place. Its people have a local reputation for being "mostly fools," though the most phenomenal peasant that ever came out of Wales was

[1] A notable exception will instantly suggest itself. But Mr. Gladstone followed the drift of Welsh popular opinion rather than led it. He had little personal intimacy with the inner life of the Welsh speaking people, and was largely and naturally dependent on information supplied by local politicians. His piety and commanding personality, coupled with the fact of his heading the party to which Welsh Nonconformity belonged, is a combination not likely to be seen again. Moreover, Mr. Gladstone's real hold on the Welsh people is denied by some of the foremost Welshmen.

produced here, and this was Dick of Aberdaron, of whom I shall say something presently. There is also a most interesting old church here, standing so close to the shore that the waves have begun seriously to threaten its existence. It is dedicated to St. Hywyn and has two aisles and some fine pillars, and once possessed the privilege of sanctuary. It is the last church too where the pilgrims huddled, before taking boat for Bardsey Island, or crossing the wild upland that still lies between us and the actual land's end. A painfully unprepossessing new edifice having been recently erected near by, this old building, almost bare of furniture, and untouched by any decorating or modern hand, seems somehow, in its nakedness, to be more suggestive of primitive times than any church in Lleyn. One can better imagine the halt and the maimed and the hopeful lying upon these bare flags, waiting for the waves to cease raging around the cruel rocks that lie between here and Bardsey, than where pews and screens and decorations speak of wholly different times and uses. But Aberdaron was once the scene of a very notable event. Shakespeare has immortalised it in *Henry IV.* by the scene where Glyndwr, Mortimer and Hotspur hold that spirited discussion in front of a map of England, which they propose dividing. The "Tripartite Alliance" has been taken some liberties with by the poet. He has laid it before the battle of Shrewsbury, whereas it was probably sealed some years afterwards, Hotspur's father, not Hotspur himself, being the third party to the compact. The Dean of Bangor's house, where it was held, was at Aberdaron, of which manor he was lord, and the convention was held in this remote spot because Northumberland was a proscribed man and afraid of making his presence too apparent.

But nothing can be seen of the land's end itself from Aberdaron, as the block of heathery upland, which forms the extreme point of Lleyn, stands up between us and it. It is

nearly a three mile walk to the grand headland of Braich y pwll which falls sheer from a height of over six hundred feet into the sea, and forms a fitting end to wild Wales. Two miles away the rocky island of Bardsey rises almost as high above the waves. "For many centuries," writes the Rev. William Hughes, in his recent *History of the Church of the Cymry*, "the island was to Welshmen what Westminster Abbey is to Englishmen—the consecrated place of entombment of all the best and bravest in the land. Bardsey has an interest of its own, so special in connection with the ecclesiastical history of Wales as to be easily made a subject of separate and distinct thought. It was known at one time as the 'Rome of Britain,' and the Welsh bards designated it as the land of Indulgences, Absolution and Pardon, the road to heaven and the gate to paradise. So great was the estimate of the sanctity of the place, that three pilgrimages to Enlli were regarded as equal to one pilgrimage to Rome." "I saw a charter of the island under the hand of the Pope of Rome," writes Canon Griffith Roberts from Milan in the year 1640. "Granting great indulgences to those who made pilgrimages thither in honour of the 20,000 saints. The island was then called the Rome of the Cymry: because the place, of its size, was so virtuous, and comparatively as great a resort as Rome itself." Between the island, and the mainland, wind and tide and cross currents make the passage from Aberdaron so uncertain that it is always said no one should venture who is not prepared to face the possibility of being kept there for a week. When Pennant crossed the strait in 1780 the boatmen, he says, ceased rowing as they neared the island, and pulling off their hats offered up a short prayer, the atmosphere seeming to be pervaded by the holiness of the place. There are a few inhabitants and a lighthouse on the island, and the scanty remains of the once famous abbey. The dust of multitudes of saints is supposed to lie here mixed with the shallow soil, and the late Lord Newborough, who owned the

island, and was himself buried on it, erected a monument, upon one side of which is inscribed, "In hoc loco requiescant in pace," and upon the other:

"Safe in this island
Where each saint would be,
How wilt thou smile
Upon life's stormy sea."

CHAPTER XVI

PWLLHELI—CRICCIETH—PORTMADOC—MAENTWROG—HARLECH

THE traveller may, if he pleases, work his way back along the rough and steep lanes of the north shore to Nevin, and thence across the peninsula by coach road to Pwllheli. We however cannot manage this circuitous and not conspicuously interesting route, but must get back to the little metropolis of Lleyn by the more direct road we came, and that without dallying, unless it be to say a few words about that celebrated personage, "Dick of Aberdaron."

Now the folk of Aberdaron, like those of a certain Southern English county, who are accused of having raked for the reflection of the moon in a horse-pond under the impression that it was a Dutch cheese, enjoy some reputation for simplicity, to use no stronger word, among their neighbours.

But Richard Jones of that place, who flourished in the beginning of this century, should have alone sufficed to remove any such slur from his compatriots for ever and aye, seeing that he was surely the most prodigious intellectual freak that ever came out of Wales. Moreover, he only died about fifty years ago, so happily there are people still among us who can endorse the marvellous tales his biographers relate of him. He had certainly the gift of tongues, and a mania for acquiring them under discouraging circumstances, developed to a degree that gives him a place to himself among village prodigies. He was the son of an illiterate carpenter, and the descendant of gener-

ations of rude Lleyn peasants. It is more than likely none of his ancestors could even read or write. But Dick himself died at sixty, the master, more or less, of thirty-five languages, as it is said. Let us for safety's sake reduce the number by one-half, and at the same time remark that he also died as he had lived, a frowsy, dirty peasant, or worse than a peasant: a loafer rather and a stroller, filthy in person, part mendicant part medicine man: one quarter idiot, three quarters genius: the



Aberdaron.

owner of an abnormal brain, if ever there was one. But where did the craving for strange tongues and the capacity for acquiring them come from? The query might well give a physiologist some food for serious contemplation.

Dick fell foul of his parents, or they rather of him, at a tender age. He had no schooling, but hung about the village schoolroom, and by the help of books he found lying about there, and of good-natured boys who had mastered the art, he learned to read in Welsh. Soon afterwards, by the same laborious methods, he

acquired English. At twenty he was still a hopeless failure at his father's trade, till, tired of being cursed and beaten, he left Lleyn, and wandered to Bangor and thence to Liverpool. When he came across an Italian or a German pedlar it was his habit to stick to him till he had learned enough of his language to form a basis for future study. It was not, however, the art of conversation in foreign tongues, dead or living, that Dick so much sought after, though even in this he appears to have been glib enough, but grammars and dictionaries were his especial joy. Hebrew he learned from tattered books that chance threw in his way. Latin and Greek he mastered with equal facility and by the same means. French, Russian, Scandinavian, all came in course of time to this road-side, tramp scholar. Patrons in plenty such a man found: bishops, clergymen, and tradesmen. They gave him work in their gardens or stables which he never did, and lent him grammars and dictionaries over which he pored with pen, ink, and paper. He was too filthy in person for the inside of a decent house, and so bizarre in appearance that he was the butt of street boys through his whole long life. He would neither work nor wash. There are plenty of pictures of him extant which show a face and head covered with bushy black hair, from which peered two bright beady eyes. His dress was rugged and uncouth, and he carried his precious library concealed about his person, which gave the latter an inflated and abnormal appearance. The way in which he clung to his books in periods of penury and semi-starvation gives much pathos to a narrative that is otherwise uncanny and unnatural. He had no ambition, except to acquire fresh languages, no thought for the morrow, no regard for money, scarcely any even for food. At one time he developed a tendency for more pronounced posing, adopting a cast-off blue and silver cavalry jacket as a dress and a cap of hare's skin with the ears sticking up as a head-gear. From the ears hung pieces of cloth, on which were inscribed sentences in Greek and Hebrew, and thus attired he would drone out the

song of Moses in Hebrew to astonished audiences in Welsh village streets. He carried a ram's horn too, slung round him, and blew upon it lusty blasts at the most inappropriate times.

Dick was a famous character throughout all North Wales, and he wandered once as far as Dover, and was for some time in London. He never begged, nor drank. Hunger compelled him occasionally to work, but he seemed to think that the public ought to supply his simple wants, and indeed they did so, after a fashion. His linguistic accomplishments were useless for any practical purpose. It was the construction of language—its roots and grammar that fascinated him. Nor had he the least desire for the information conveyed in their literature. He was a thorough philologist and scholar of the old school was Dick in this respect, but his facility was as great as his ardour. A learned don from Oxford who once sought an interview with him in Wales put him on to construe Homer, carefully keeping the breadth of the table between himself and the frowsy bundle of rags that represented the poor student. Dick, however, proved himself quite equal to the doctor's tests, but with the unconscious enthusiasm of a scholar and a purist waxed contemptuously indignant when his reverend examiner began to question him regarding the personality of the heroes in the Iliad and touched upon the story therein contained. Had any one been found to wash and dress Dick of Aberdaron, and send him to the University, there is no doubt that it is to the Cambridge of his day that he should have gone! Though Dick was first and chiefly, according to his rude lights, a scholar, contemporary authorities entitled to credence declare that he could speak fourteen languages fluently. He would never ask charity, though he both expected and accepted it, and had been reduced for some years before his death to telling fortunes. He was buried in St. Asaph churchyard, and was followed to the grave by many leading people, who doubtless

would have helped him in his life-time if he had not been such an incorrigible vagabond.

Pwllheli is the capital of the peninsula. It is a prosperous market town of some 3,000 souls, of whom exactly three, so an enterprising cockney coach driver who lives there tells me, are Saxons. The town straggles along the foot of the low coast ridge, and is a short mile from the shore, the estuary of a small river making quite a respectable harbour, where a numerous fleet of fishing smacks and coasters float betimes. Still I do not think that the sea-goers of Pwllheli are greatly adventurous, that its fishermen go far afield, or that its traders are likely to be found upon distant seas. As I have before remarked, the habit of the Welshman is only nautical in so far as necessity compels. It has always been so, with some notable exceptions, particularly that of Gryffydd ap Owain Gwynedd, who, it will be remembered, discovered America and founded the dynasty of Montezuma, and of the less mythical Piers Griffith of Penrhyn, who followed Drake and emulated his deeds. The Bay of Cardigan, too, is ill sailing for large craft: and few venture within its great and treacherous embrace. To look at from the shore, it is a lonely untravelled sea, that lies between the dim capes of Pembroke and the surf-lashed steeps of Bardsey. In the next chapter, when we are lifted high up on the feet of the Merioneth Mountains, it will be obvious enough why navigators give these coasts a berth so wide.

For the present, harbour and seaport though Pwllheli is, I shall content myself with remarking that it is not likely any stirring traditions of great deeds upon the deep warm the old blood and fire the new along its wharves. The place suggests a much greater interest in shore-going matters, as indeed it actually has. Its solid, old-fashioned inns are redolent of market day, and seem profoundly indifferent as to whether it is January or July, and quite regardless of the evanescent tourist. They suggest, in fact, generous libations of cworw da and prolonged discussions upon black bullocks. As the Welsh farmer seldom

drinks anything in his own house, it would be a zealot indeed who would quarrel with him over his moderate convivialities on fair and market days. But there is nothing to detain us in Pwllheli. It is Georgian rather than ancient, except, of course, the original town which has a little history. Save for the fact that both begin with a P, there would seem little connection between Pwllheli and Poitiers, but, nevertheless, the former was created a corporate town to do honour to a hero of that immortal fight. This was Nigel de Loryng, who was a close attendant



Low Tide, the Harbour Pwllheli.

during the whole of that memorable day upon the Black Prince. West Carnarvonshire, from the royal point of view, then offered a virgin field for royal land grants, so the Prince, anxious to reward his faithful captain, incorporated Pwllheli and Nevin and bestowed them with suitable lands on Nigel, to be held by him and his heirs for ever in consideration of one rose payable annually. The property was worth £46 a year, a goodly sum in those days, and the remains of the mansion where the grantee lived are still to be seen between Abersoch and Aberdaron,

while Porth Nigel, the polite name for Hell's Mouth, still preserves the name of the doughty Norman warrior.

Far away from the cheery hum of the little town, and over against the flat shore, a long row of prodigiously high, and painfully new, white houses is much in evidence. This is New Pwllheli, an aspiring watering place, unlovely enough, like the rest of them, in its back view, but boasting attractions for those who look out from its front windows, and not at its back ones, that are reasonably credible. I will ask my reader, however, to take my word for it that the sands of Pwllheli are well adapted to the wooden spade and bucket, as well as entirely safe for all bathers not intent on suicide. But a greater authority than I has been here, namely, the "distinguished London physician," who invariably comes to the assistance of aspiring watering places; and in this case he has declared it to be his deliberate opinion that the air of New Pwllheli contains a combination of ingredients such as no other air in Britain contains in such perfection. I do not know where these "distinguished physicians" expect to go to when they die. The air of all Lleyn is sweet and fresh, but that of the south shore particularly, is to some people anything but invigorating. I am afraid, if hygiene only is considered, there is no doubt that Cromer or Clacton-upon-Sea can give many points to any part of this fair country. Cromer, some instinct tells me, would strenuously resent being classed with Clacton: but compared to the outlook from these Pwllheli sands, or indeed from any portion of this coast, such a matter would be a squabble of pigmies, with which we have no concern. Comparisons, we all know, are odious, but if the thoughts turned to such things here, it would be, I am assured by many competent judges, towards the bay of Naples they would incline.

It is no mean vantage point, and one that may fear comparison with few on earth, from which, with one glance of the eye, you may see the sun gleaming on the slopes of Cader Idris above a sparkling sea, and at the same time the clouds lifting from the

peak of Snowdon. For here it is not all distance and magnificence. A foreground as sweet as any in all Britain, and what more can be said? lies about our path as we press along the eight miles that divides us from Criccieth, the chief watering place of the peninsula. The excellent and gently undulating road runs near the coast, though never touching it. The village of Abererch, lush and leafy, with its low-browed, bright-washed cottages, gay with flowery frontages, straggles along the roadside to where the sparkling Erch rushes towards its tiny estuary. The old church might well tempt you to ask where the sexton lived and call for the keys. It is worth while only if you care for local history as written on church walls and in churchyards. There are beautiful glimpses, through screens of oak leaves, of the sea, brilliant in the blue of a sunny afternoon in the full height of summer. Pastures and meadows, green as in the west of Ireland, glow between hedges laden with honeysuckle and wild roses, while white farmhouses glint through the woods and grey roofs peer above the trees. The country hereabouts is no hillier than Warwickshire, but crystal streams sing with the voice of the mountain in the hollows; and old mill wheels drone on in half-hearted fashion as if conscious that their day was all but passed. Here, too, is an ancient barn, covered with ivy or virginia creeper, standing inconsequently in the fields; there a stone wall by the roadside, a rare study in tints, and bursting out in every fissure with the bloom of heather, foxglove, gorse, and lichen and a host of humble flowers whose names do not trip so readily to the tongue. There is nothing conventional in Welsh landscape; even where the land is flat it is rarely tame. Every hundred yards brings some fresh delight of foreground, with the great mountains hanging ever and always in the sky.

But the country after this grows somewhat bare, green flats stretch far away towards the sea-shore, and reedy pools beyond the line of cultivation glisten in the sun, and seagulls and peewits sweep over wastes of common. In the midst of the

open, and close to the shore, lies the junction of Afon Wen, where the Cambrian and North-Western lines meet, and where travellers bound from Mid-Wales for Carnarvon or Bangor find some compensation for tedious delays in the mountain panorama, which is nowhere finer than from here. Leaving this upon the right, the woods of Gwynfryn, with a glimpse of its mansion, show in the distance upon the left. Sir Hugh Nanney lives there now. Its owners in the Jevan ap Merydydd period took a brisk hand in the family feuds of West Carnarvonshire, and assisted, it may be remembered, in the smoking out of Howell of Bron-y-foel. Hither, too, fled the poet Shelley and his wife after the midnight scare at Tan-y-rallt. The landscape now once more becomes rich and wooded, and above it the Snowdon Mountains, with Hebog in front, begin to loom very large. We are running down a steep hill into the village of Llanystymdwy, and may well pause when we get there upon its old stone bridge and watch the bright waters of the Dwyfawr, bursting ont of a fairyland of rock and woodland, rush far beneath us, and onward through more woodlands, to the sea. The village gathers about the old bridge on one side, and upon the other its handsome church stands close upon the river bank. Nor would you think a stream could gather so much size and strength as this one, seeing that as the crows flies it is but little over half a dozen miles to its fountain head, in the lake of Cwmystradlyn, which lies beneath the shadow of Moel Hebog.

It was near Llanystumdwy, at his house of Aberkin, that Howell ap Madog Vaughan fell in a ferocious faction fight about the time of the other feuds which have found a place in these pages. "And he being down and wounded on the head, his mother," says the Gwydir chronicle, "clapped her hand upon the gash." But in the fury of the fight it was only to lose the half of it and three of her fingers in the finishing blow that was struck at him. Howell had just breath enough left to abjure his mother not to let this quarrel rest, so long as

she had sight to look upon her maimed hand. She kept her word to the letter. John Owen, the son of John ap Meredydd, was the slayer, and having the bad luck to be after all upon the losing side on that sanguinary day, was kept a prisoner for seven years by the steadfast dowager of Aberkin; and was only then released because the lady herself, together with her maimed hand, was laid beneath the Llanystumdwy churchyard. Sir John Wynn's uncle told him, how, as a boy, he was sent over by his father to Aberkin to bring tidings of his cousin's condition. He found him, says Sir John, "laid on the bed, his wounded men lying in great numbers on a cocherie, or long bed, above the degree, near the high table all in breadth of his hall, all gored and wallowing in their own blood. Likewise he saw the milk cows brought to the door, and the milk carried hot to the wounded for restoring their blood."

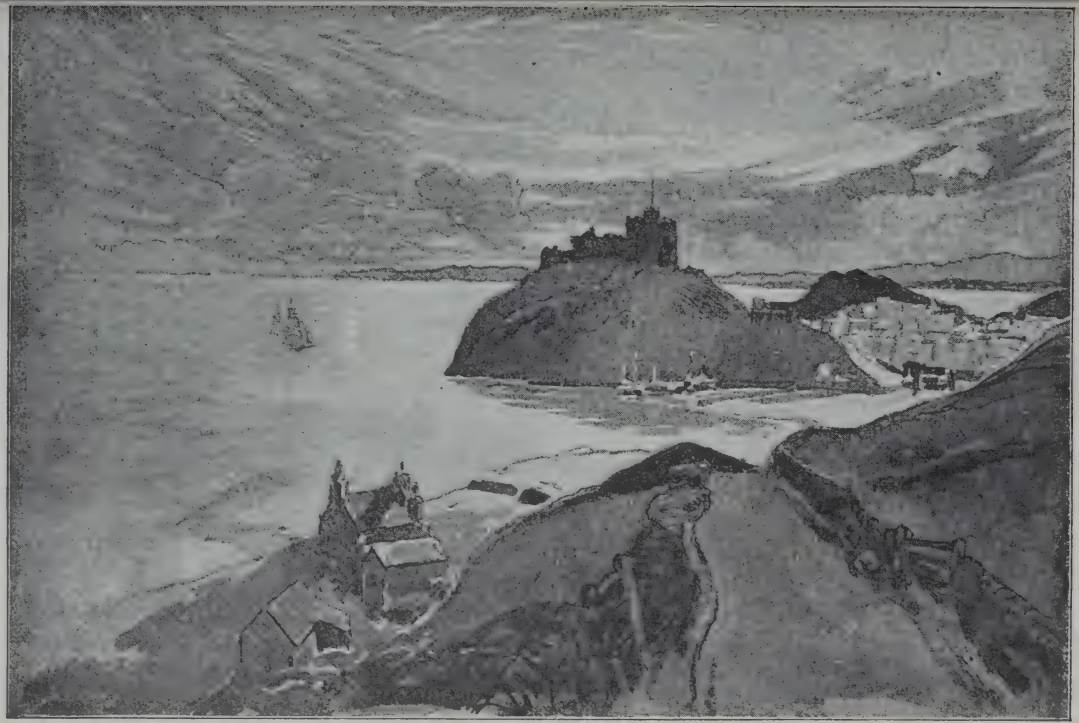
As we run along the two straight miles to Criccieth, past parks and pastures and gardens, and prosperous houses, new and old, I will take the opportunity of apologising for any seeming inconsistencies or inaccuracies I may have perpetrated in the spelling of Welsh names. If such errors there be they are in fact more apparent than real. Many of these names belong to the phonetic period, when people spelt according to their inclinations; and confusion is worse confounded by writers, not actually modern, Anglicising, or partly Anglicising the Welsh words. The vowel u, for instance, in Welsh is sounded as the English ĭ, the y is sometimes sounded as a u and sometimes as an ĭ. Griffith, for example, is both Gruffydd and Gryffydd in the same page of comparatively recent writers. Owen, again, is Owain, Oweyn, and has other variations. Modern Welsh names have, of course, settled down to a uniform method of spelling, but in the writing of times not recent there is nothing of the kind. Of all known tongues, Welsh is one of the hardest to acquire. To any resident in North Wales, who has presumably a fair lease of life before him, the effort would be well worth making. But

assuredly not for any one otherwise circumstanced. That, however, is no reason at all why English people who regularly frequent the Principality should not master a few leading canons of pronunciation. It would save them infinite trouble in finding their way about, to say the least of it, and prevent them from making themselves at times entirely ridiculous. It would enable them, not only to imitate the ordinary sounds with sufficient accuracy for general purposes, but to recognise those occasional words with which no Saxon tongue can hope to grapple, and thus recognising, to go warily and without pretension. It would not, I am sure, take any one more than a quarter of an hour to permanently grasp the fact that a double d was the English th as sounded in the word *breathe*, that an f was invariably a v, and a ff an f, and that the letter c was always hard. The much-vexed Ll is too obvious to be ignored. There are many receipts for it, but if the alien will place his tongue against the back of his front teeth and blow slightly, it is the most that any Welshman could expect of him. The vowels and diphthongs would be a greater tax upon the memory, but the effort is perhaps worth making. The y is troublesome because, as I have already remarked, it is sometimes pronounced as a u and sometimes as an i, according to whether it occupies the first or last place in a word. Mynydd, for instance, a mountain, phonetically spelt would be munnith. The w, which looks to the uninitiated so hopeless in print, is simply *oo*. This profound dissertation on the Welsh language is getting too prolonged, but having got so far I should like to rub in the useful fact that the Welsh aw is pronounced as ow in "now," and also that the emphasis is nearly always on the penultimate, which gives, I think, a special resonancy to the language. An example of both these rules may aptly be found in the name, Trawsfynydd, which becomes to the ear Trowsvúnnith. The Welsh th is sounded as in the word *death* in contradistinction to the dd, which, I have said, is as in the word *breathe*.

Having thus briefly disposed of the Welsh language, Criccieth, which philologists say, means a "cry of distress," now demands our attention, for we are already in its very modern street of shops and lodging houses. I shall always, however, remember Criccieth with affection, for it was there I assisted in humble fashion to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of Her Majesty's glorious reign, suspending a coloured table cloth out of window from the bottom joint of a fishing-rod, while the ministers of every denomination, followed by the school children intent on buns and tea, marched past in loose formation. Criccieth is a charming watering place, and hugs to itself the proud consciousness of being still select and exclusive. These sort of things all go by comparison, and they have at any rate nothing to do with our scheme of narrative. Moreover, as the place is hopelessly modern, we will go at once to that corner of it between its two bays, where all that is left of bygone times is represented by a ruined castle on a lofty almost sea-girt rock, and a cluster of fishermen's cottages pressing beneath its shadow. "A decayed town," says Leland, "a castle, long since ruined, and two or three poor houses. Hath been an ancient market."

From the sunny parade, which faces the sea and the south, the old castle proudly perched upon its lofty rock towards the west presents certainly an object of great dignity. It is said to have been built by Llewellyn the Great, partly to keep his relatives in Lleyn in order, and partly, no doubt, to protect the country from attack by sea. Compared to Harlech whose noble grey towers stand conspicuous across Portmadoc Bay, Criccieth was a fortress of the second grade, but it boasts nevertheless no mean record.

Now it so happened that when Llewellyn died, his eldest son, Gryffydd, was the popular choice for the throne of North Wales. The fact that he was illegitimate did not count for very much in the Wales of those days. But Llewelyn had married, it may be remembered, Joan, the daughter of King John of



Criccieth Castle.

England, and her eldest son David had potent outside influences, as well as some politic inside ones, that pressed his technical claim to the throne, and with success. David, however, though reigning against the popular wish, which distrusted his English blood, would not let sleeping dogs lie. He must needs lay rough hands upon his half brother, Gryffydd, deprive him of his patrimony in Lleyn, and immure him in Criccieth Castle. Here the unhappy Prince languished for many years, greatly to the disgust of the nobility of Gwynedd, and to the wrath of the Welsh bishops, who went so far as to excommunicate their monarch when remonstrance proved fruitless. But David cared for none of them, till at length urgent petitions were sent by the Welsh nobility to Henry III., his uncle, who sided with the native chieftains. But the Welsh King remained inexorable, declaring to Henry that if Gryffydd were at large there would be no hope of peace in Wales. The King of England, however, took another view and emphasised it by summoning an army to meet him at Gloucester. David at last took alarm, for Gryffydd's friends had offered Henry terms more favourable than those upon which he held his crown from the suzerain power, and he consented to a compromise, undertaking to send his brother to Henry's safe keeping. For poor Gryffydd, however, it was but a case of "out of the frying pan into the fire;" since no sooner had Henry got him in his grip than it seemed to strike him that a Welsh prince was better under lock and key than at large, and he promptly locked his guest up in the Tower.

Here Gryffydd, whose crime lay in being an eldest son, languished till he could endure it no longer, and made a bold bid for freedom. His young son, Owen, it so happened, was sharing his captivity, and one night, making the bed-clothes into ropes, the elder man contrived to let himself out of the window, and proceeded to descend in this precarious fashion: but being fat and heavy, the frail supports gave way, and falling to the bottom of the moat he broke his neck upon

the spot. Henry stamped and swore, not at the untimely death of his captive and nephew, but at the guards who had thus permitted him to elude them. The body was carried to Conway, on petition of the Welsh nobility, and there buried in state. The boy, Owen, had a fate woefully similar to that of his father's, though scarcely so undeserved. For on the succession of his brother, the last Llewelyn to the throne of Gwynedd, he was unwisely joined with him in the sovereignty. But Owen would have all or none; and rising against Llewelyn came the worst out of the fight, and being taken prisoner was confined, as we have seen in a former chapter, in the lonely tower of Dolbadarn at Llanberis, which was not only twenty years his prison, but proved ultimately to be his grave.

Much more cheerful than these woes of an ill-fated line are the associations which so intimately connect the old towers of Criccieth with that redoubtable Welsh hero, Howel y Fwyall, or Howel of the pole-axe. Like Nigel de Lorynge of Pwllheli, Howel won his fame at Poitiers. He was not, however, a Norman, but a son of the soil, one of the many Welshmen who followed the banners of England through the French wars and fought beneath them so valiantly. He had nothing to do, of course, with that Howell at whose smoking out from Bron y foel we assisted at, nor yet with the Howell whose bloody death at Llanystymdwy the ink is scarcely yet dry from the telling of. The gentleman of the pole-axe flourished a hundred years before these other Howells. He was an ancestor, or a collateral ancestor, of course, but the point is that he was a man of Herculean strength and stature, and went into the thick of the fight at Poitiers armed with a pole-axe. With this formidable weapon he performed prodigious feats of valour, above all acquiring immortality by lopping off the head of the French King's horse at a single blow, and as the Welsh accounts have it, taking his Majesty prisoner; though we know this honour is claimed by another person. However that may be

King Edward was amazingly pleased with his Welsh champion, making him Governor of Criccieth Castle, which Edward I. had rebuilt, with a salary of £100 a year and a garrison of thirty men, a chaplain, surgeon and a carpenter. He furthermore granted to Howel and his heirs for ever the right to wear a pole-axe as their device, and it may be seen to-day on the quarterings of many Welsh families. But a much more uncommon mark of royal favour than any of these was bestowed on Howel, and one which gives some colour to the story of the French King. For it was ordained that after his decease a dish of meat guarded by eight yeomen should be set every day for ever before his pole-axe in Criccieth Castle, and afterwards given to the poor. Pennant says that this strange ceremonial was observed for upwards of 200 years.

But the grass grows now over moat and foss, and weeds riot amid the crumbled walls. There is not much left but the two gateway towers looking inland towards Snowdon and over the fair undulations of Eivioneth, and part of the curtain and some fragments of towers facing the sea. The waves in a south-west wind break finely against the point and leap high up the sheer sides of the promontory far below, and in a storm the spray is whirled against what is left of the masonry that totters on the very brink of the precipice.

I should like, too, if there were space, to say something of how stoutly Criccieth held out for Henry IV. in Glyndwr's wars, under its constable Jevan ap Meredydd. But we must push on to Harlech, and this, though plainly visible and only five miles distant across the bay, is twelve or thirteen round by road, and a most beautiful road it is, over which I would advise no one to hurry as we must hurry. I cannot say too often and too emphatically how excellent are these North Welsh highways. Re-metalling here, as everywhere, is a necessary evil out of which good may come, and it may sometimes be applied in a fashion not too judicious or conciliatory from the cyclist's point of view. These roads,

moreover, it must be remembered, carry the traveller through and through the very heart of a country that Mr. Pennell will, I think, bear me out in saying has nothing comparable to it in this island short of North Western Scotland, and when you get thus far you are in a region which, in comparison with Wales, is without a past. The English lake country which springs at once to the mind is comparatively meagre in story, is circumscribed in area, and has no sea coast. Whether we take the sea-coast roads, the mountain peaks and passes, the Norman castles, or the exquisite loveliness of the ordinary foregrounds, each would be difficult to match in detail. But where you get all these together as in North Wales, and find a country at the same time steeped in history and legend, it seems to me that nothing would remain to be said, in the matter of its pre-eminence, if it were not for the fact that Londoners and south country people generally do not know Wales. This may seem a strange assertion, for theoretically it is a familiar country. But it seems to me that not one person in twenty of those who move about with intelligence and in the average fashion know anything whatever about North Wales, nor can they tell you precisely why. I will go so far as to say that I do not believe the public of the southern part of England have any notion how beautiful a country lies thus at their gates. Wales, moreover, has the merit of being cheap ; and you will meet everywhere, among the natives, with good manners and civility. You will not be cheated nor hustled, nor, unless you choose to run your head into certain notable resorts, in the height of the season, will you find your fellow creatures in sufficient numbers to disturb the silence of the hills or the peaceful beauty of the vales.

From Criccieth to Portmadoc the road is something hilly, though not to an extent that a strong rider would pay much heed to. It twists about at some little distance from the sea and at some height above it. In the interval soft green hills rise and fall with a fashion and colouring characteristic of this western coast. People have lived on it, and lived well, for

generations, and both antiquity and comfort are spelt by the grey stone homesteads that seem to have taken so firm a root in leafy hollows, or on sunny ridges, where the blue and green of sea and hill meet. The sheep pastures are rich enough, no doubt, but they tumble suddenly into deep hollows, or leap up fantastically into rude crowns of rock, or melt imperceptibly into glades where indigenous oaks, grey with lichen, present a screen of leaves for the sea wind to blow softly over. The hay fields in the flats glow green against the black crags of the seashore, and streams that upon our left hand leap cheerily over the rocks can be seen, away upon our right, glistening towards the sea in wide-spreading, reedy pools, where cattle stand in lazy noonday mood. The great pile of Moel Gest begins to close all seaward outlooks. Every colour that nature paints glows upon its sides, and summit, and foot hills ; gorse and heather blaze and bloom on every vacant upland that cultivation has not covered with its varied patchwork, or that grey rock and tangled woodland do not fill, or that is not clad in the sweet short turf, which spreads so rarely green a carpet on these western hills, beneath the sheep's light tread. And here and there too are glimpses of blue sea, sparkling beyond the green, and the great mountains of Merioneth looming above the further shore with the misty indistinctness of a summer noon.

Among the small homesteads, which cluster thick about the feet and slopes of Gest, is Bron-y-foel, and right upon the roadside at the far end of a long avenue driven through a wood, so dense and dark that you could not pass it by without remark, is another ancient seat that has played its part in Eivioneth annals, and is even to-day well worth a visit. Ystymllyn has long relapsed into a farmhouse, but it is still in its interior rich with the traces of a Tudor and Queen Anne gentility, and full of relics of the Wynnes, who once lived here, and containing much old furniture and oak, together with pictures and weapons of the period of the Civil War. I don't

think strangers often look in here, or that one in a thousand of the merry cyclists that in summer pass its gates on the way between Criccieth and Portmadoc, are conscious that there is anything to see behind this sombre woodland. It is a tale perhaps hardly worth telling, but there is something in the deep gloom of the approach to the house that seems in keeping with the recollection of three Ellises, who lived here one after the other in the seventeenth century. "Owen Ellis of Ystymllyn," says the brief record, "the son of Cadwallader,



Snowdon from Traeth Mawr Embankment.

died by a fall from his horse going home at night after drinking all day in Criccieth 1622." "Ellis Ellis, his son, fell mad and continued so for a long time, and at length in that case died in 1637." The next Ellis was no less unfortunate, for he too "fell from his horse and broke his neck riding home at night from Pwllheli, leaving a wife great with child." It was full time surely that the succession failed, as it soon did, and gave place to a less ill-omened name.

Portmadoc is a busy little sea-port, with a wide street and no pretension to antiquity for very obvious reasons. Its people,

no doubt, think and move and have their being in slate, and all that pertains to it, though some of them inhabit charming villas nestling among trees at the foot of Moel Gest, which dominates the town. Going still southward, the road and railroad cross Traeth mawr, upon the mighty embankment with which Mr. Maddocks drove back the sea. And the view of Snowdon and its satellites from the centre of this, upon a clear day, is the most complete and imposing perhaps of any.



Festiniog from Maentwrog.

It is, in fact, a distinctly unique bit of road from here to Harlech. There is no sea coast route in Wales of quite the same character. You may cross Traeth bach, or the estuary of the Dwryd, upon a bridge near its mouth, or you may ascend the river on one bank to Maentwrog and come back upon the other to the coast. The former way is eight, the latter is sixteen miles. But I should be a poor guide indeed if I hesitated to adopt the last and the longer route. I am quite tired of eulogising the Welsh roads. For

very weariness I think I should have dropped the subject if it had not been for Mr. Pennell, who is a cyclist not only of European experience, but of official rank in the grand order of the wheel, and who has just caught me up, so to speak, and authorised me officially to lay it on as thick as ever I please in this respect.

This is very cheering, and so I will let myself go and at once proceed to the statement that this road from Portmadoc to Harlech is one of the best I ever rode upon in my life, and



On the Road to Harlech.

certainly one of the loveliest. But its beauty is of a type not easy to reduce to words. There are masses of oak woods mingled with ash and birch and sycamore blowing above green knolls, and banks, where ferns and mossy rocks and white spouting rills and rank grass catch the sunbeams that find their way through the open canopy of leaves. There are glimpses of distant mountain peaks here and there; Moelwyn, Cynicht, and Snowdon. Nearer hills, of less renown, are still more often peeping out above the

clustering woods, at heights that are sufficiently imposing. The road is mostly by the waterside, and between the enclosing heights and shining through the leaves is always a gleam of yellow sand and blue water, with the white wings of seafowl flashing against the dark background of the narrow estuary. Approaching Maentwrog there is a peep up the vale of Festiniog, one of the many gems of North Wales. The wonderfully rich and broken and varied sides of Moelwyn form its northern wall. The Manods lift their bold heads at the close of its short course. Below, a rare wealth of meadow and woodland fringe and overlook the waters of the Dwryd as they urge their short but swift career to meet the tide where the bridge of Maentwrog at the picturesque village of that name brings us round again upon the seaward track. Thence a road no less leafy, nor in its way less beautiful, carries us down the Dwryd under the shadow of the Rhinog Range, and turning the corner, after passing the ancient seat of Glynne buried in its woods, soon brings us in sight of the grim towers of Harlech.

CHAPTER XVII

HARLECH—LLANBEDR—BARMOUTH

THERE is no doubt that the waves, in times not greatly distant, lashed the foot of the high rock, upon whose summit the Castle of Harlech is so nobly placed. Now, however, the "Morfa Harlech," beloved of Merioneth and other golfers, spreads green and dry for more than a half mile towards the sea, which booms behind a barrier of sand hills that in size and shape would do credit to the coast of Holland or the Pas de Calais.

Springing sharply from the morfa rise the lower ledges of the mountains of Ardudwy, that long coast range of Merioneth, which stands up so nobly and so boldly when viewed from the opposite shores of Lleyn. Along a terrace two hundred feet or more above the plain straggles the ancient village of Harlech, and upon a projecting rock, with a pride of pose before which words are powerless, stands the remotest, and in some ways the most majestic of the conquering Edward's seven castles.

But legend is busy with the rock of Harlech, for over a thousand years before it carried the weight of these great Norman towers. For here, it is written in the Mabinogi, dwelt the unfortunate Branwen, white-bosomed sister of "Brân the blessed" King of Britain, who, according to the *Triads*, is supposed to have introduced Christianity into Britain, to have been the father of Caractacus, and to have shared his captivity in Rome. "Now it so happened," says the Welsh Chronicle, "he was one

afternoon at Harlech in Ardudwy, at his court, and he sat upon the great rock looking over the sea, and with him were his brothers, and many nobles likewise, as was fitting to see around a king. And as they sat thus, they beheld thirteen ships coming from the south of Ireland, and making towards them. And they came with a swift motion, the wind being behind them, and they neared them rapidly. 'I see ships afar,' said the king, 'coming swiftly towards the land. Command the men of the court that they equip themselves, and go and learn their intent. So the men equipped themselves and



Near Harlech.

went down towards them. And when they saw the ships near, certain were they that they had never seen ships better furnished. Beautiful flags of satin were upon them; and behold one of the ships outstripped the others, and they saw a shield lifted up above the side of the ship, and the point of the shield was upwards in token of peace. And the men drew near that they might hold converse. Then they put out boats and came towards the land. And they saluted the king. Now the king could hear them from the place where he was upon the rock above their heads. 'Heaven prosper you,' said he, 'and be ye welcome. To whom do these ships belong and who

is the chief amongst you? 'Lord,' said they, 'Matholwch, King of Ireland, is here, and these ships belong to him.' 'Wherefore comes he,' asked the king, 'and will he come to the land?' 'He is a suitor unto thee, lord,' said they, 'and he will not land unless he have his boon.' 'And what may that be?' inquired the king. 'He desires to ally himself with thee, lord,' said they, 'and he comes to ask Branwen, the daughter of Lleyn, that, if it seem well to thee, the island of the



Harlech Castle from the Shore.

mighty may be leagued with Ireland and both become more powerful.' 'Verily,' said he, 'let him come to land and we will take counsel thereupon.' So Matholwch landed and they received him joyfully, and great was the throng in the palace that night, and next day they took counsel and resolved to bestow Branwen upon Matholwch. Now she was one of the three chief ladies of this island and she was the fairest damsel in the land."

The wedding was fixed to take place at Aberffraw in Anglesey, and both courts proceeded there, the Irish by sea and the British by land. And there they held a mighty wedding feast, all in tents, for no house, says the chronicler, could contain Bran the blessed. Whether this was on account of a passion for fresh air or of his physical dimensions we are not told.

But the story of Branwen the white-bosomed would fill the whole of a chapter. I must therefore, in brief, relate how sadly this auspicious match turned out, through no fault of either of the contracting parties. The first mishap occurred on the day of the wedding, when an ill-conditioned brother of the bride's turned up, and seeing a great number of gaily caparisoned horses by the shore, and inquiring whose they were, was informed they were the King of Ireland's, who had just married his sister. Whereupon Evnissgen became very wroth at not having been consulted in the matter, and proceeded to lop off the horses' tails and ears, and otherwise maltreat them. There was then a great to-do, as may be well imagined. But ultimately Matholwch was paid for the horses, and sailed away with his bride to Ireland, entirely pacified so far as he was himself concerned. And Branwen won great love and popularity there till the insults her husband had received from Evnissgen began to rankle afresh in the hearts of his relations. And overawing Matholwch, they drove the poor Queen Consort to the kitchen and forced her to be cook to the household. So in her sore plight Branwen caught a starling and trained it to hold converse with her, and having told the bird where her brother lived in Britain, she pinned a note beneath its wing. And the bird soared away, and arriving safely in the island of the mighty, delivered the letter to Brân the blessed. Whereupon Brân invaded Ireland with a great force, and there was both parleying and fighting, and a considerable amount of magic at work for many weeks.

But Brân got so much the worst of the struggle that there

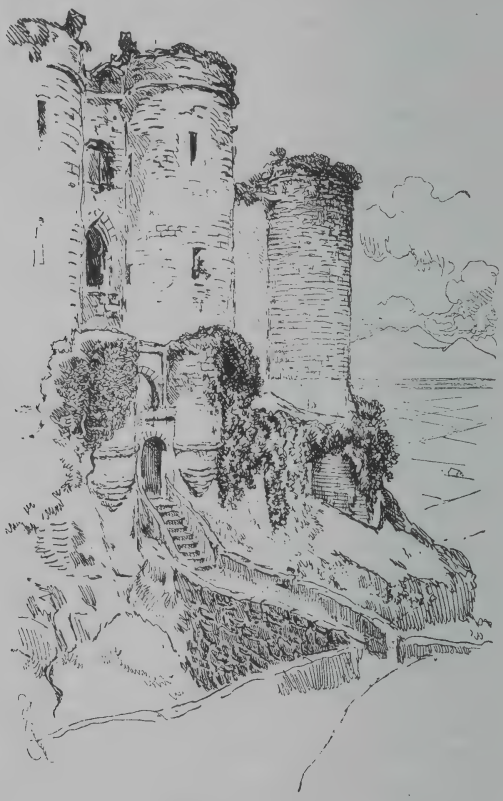
were at length only seven of his men left besides himself, and he being wounded, commanded that his head should be cut off and carried to Harlech, and kept there for seven years, and then taken to London, and buried upon the White Mount, with the face towards France. So the remnant of the British, the seven knights, taking the unhappy Branwen and her brother's head with them, returned to Harlech, landing in Aber Alaw in Anglesey, where they sat down to rest. And Branwen looked towards Ireland and towards the island of the mighty to see if she could make them out beyond the waves. "'Alas,' said she, 'woe is me that ever I was born: two islands have been destroyed because of me.' Then she uttered a loud groan and there break her heart. And they made her a four-sided grave and buried her upon the banks of the Alaw." The spot is to this day called "Ynys Branwen"; and in the year 1813 they found there, beneath a tumulus, an urn in good preservation, containing ashes and fragments of calcined bone. And he would be a bold man who went into the neighbourhood and ventured to assert that these ashes were not those of the ill-starred Branwen, the white-bosomed sister of Brân the blessed.

However shadowy may have been the walls of the old Twr Bronwen upon the rock of Harlech and the old legends that surround it, there is nothing mythical about these massive round towers and lofty curtains that the first Edward reared here, nor legendary in the deeds of arms they have witnessed. In every war since their foundation they have played a leading part. Glyndwr for long besieged the castle and for still longer his own forces were besieged here, while Mortimer, his son-in-law and ally, died here on the last occasion. And when in the decline of the Welsh chieftain's power the place was captured, it was the temporary refuge of his wife and daughter and the dead Mortimer's children, who were carried to London as prisoners.

In the Wars of the Roses, too, great things were done at Harlech and occasioned the writing of that stirring march

which if music can nerve an arm or fire a soul seems to me prodigiously well calculated to do both.

In the days of Henry VI and Margaret, one David ap Sinion



Gateway, Harlech Castle.

was Constable of the castle. But Edward IV on his succession requiring him to give it up, the doughty Welshman, who had fought in the French wars, refused, and occasioned that famous

and desolating march across Wales of Lord Herbert—afterwards of Pembroke—and his brother, of which we heard something in a former chapter. The Constable on being called upon by Herbert to surrender, made a notable rejoinder: He had held a castle so long, he said, in France that all the old women in Wales had talked about it, and now he declared he would hold Harlech so long that he would set the tongues of all the old women in France wagging. At length, however, after a long siege he surrendered, on condition that Herbert should do what he could to save his life. The King grumbled and gave his promise, but afterwards showed signs of breaking it, whereupon Herbert, with commendable honour, most humbly begged his Majesty to do one of two things: either to allow him to put David back in the castle, and send some other captain to try and fetch him out again, or failing that, to take his, Herbert's, life in lieu of the Constable's so that he might prove he had done his uttermost to keep his word. Harlech was the last castle to hold out for the house of Lancaster and one of the last to do the same for the King in the Civil War, surrendering finally to Colonel Jones of Maesygarnedd, Cromwell's brother-in-law, of whom we heard something in the neighbourhood of Llangollen.

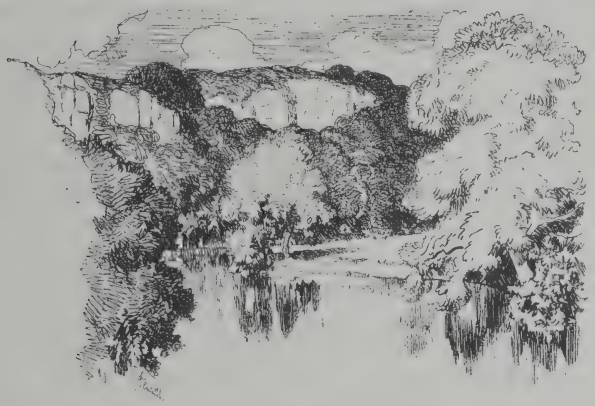
The view from the battlements of Harlech is truly noble. Snowdon and its Satellites, when the skies are clear, rising in great majesty and perfection of outline to the north; while the great promontory of Lleyn stretches far away to the westward, throwing here and there into the sky those isolated peaks, which give it so marked a character. Nor is it any wonder that Harlech, in a quiet and even select fashion, is popular. Except for the houses which have sprung up to meet this recent demand, it has always been, perhaps, the most insignificant-looking place in Britain to have borne the name of a town, to have had assizes and quarter sessions and been at one time the capital of a county. There is nothing now of old Harlech, and never has been anything but a small cluster of



Harlech Castle from the East.

mean cottages. And these look the smaller and the more insignificant from the very strength and size of the great castle, which, on the landward side, opening to the village, seems to have been made especially formidable, with a view no doubt to the fierceness of the Welsh attacks, and its isolated situation.

The coast road from Harlech southwards is hardly so good as most of those we have been travelling upon of late, but is swung finely, for quite a distance, and at some elevation, between the mountains and the sea. Only at one point, how-



Study near Harlech.

ever, the waves actually break beneath us : for all along this Ardudwy coast runs a strip of drained marshes or sandy barrens, the villages following each other in quick succession where hill and plain meet. The Artro however, debouching into the sea at Llanbedr, makes a great break and opens out a long drift into the mountains, and reveals the vision of a leafy valley winding far inland into distant scenes suggestive of much sternness and grandeur. A good road turns up it, and though relapsing, when civilisation is left behind, into a farm lane, may readily be followed to its terminus by those who love the constant

company of a joyous mountain stream leaping through wild sylvan scenery of the greenest and the richest, that this moist coast of Merioneth can boast of.

But this would not be sufficient excuse for going up there now and embarking on one of those side rambles which are outside my plan of campaign if it were not that there is something at the end of it which I cannot bring myself to pass within six miles of and ignore. This is Lake Cwm Bychan, which, for loneliness of situation and sternness of surroundings, as well as for the beauty of its approaches, is among the spots in North Wales that most appeal to me. Traps can be laboriously hauled there, but it is well to leave wheels of any sort at Dolwreiddiog, a farmhouse on the verge of civilisation, where the Artro ceases to burrow in woods and glimmers in zig-zag fashion through the open heathy moorland.

Here the Rhinog Mountains, rising high before us, shut out the east. Lofty spurs come out to threaten us upon the right and left, crowned with a wild turmoil of rock and crag; and entering between them, we find a long lake filling the narrow valley. A track leads along the northern shore, till at the far end, under the shadow of the wild and really savage slopes of the Rhinog range, in a veritable *cul-de-sac*, is an ancient stone house and a trifling oasis of meadow, and the signs of a small pastoral industry. It is, I think, the loneliest and most impressively situated homestead I know of in Wales, and looks its part best in clouds and storms. The human interests of the spot are in rare sympathy with its natural sublimity. The stone house, which is small, bare, unsheltered, and rude, was built about 1600. But the Lloyds, who have only lost the property quite recently, were living here for 500 years before that—monarchs of this solitude of crag and cliff and lake, and such pasture as grows between the rocks that tower to heaven with an Alpine ruggedness on almost every side. Nature has set her own bounds to this romantic estate, which may be some dozen of square miles in area, though indeed, to estimate such a volcanic

looking wilderness by miles or acres, never, I should imagine, occurred to any one but an ordnance surveyor. It carries to-day 500 sheep: there is no reason to suppose it was ever capable of carrying a sheep more, or a sheep less. And upon this, for nearly eight centuries, lived in direct succession, a family who had the right, at any rate, to bear arms. I don't know where they went for their wives. It is possible, of course, heiresses may have found their way into this astounding wilderness; but I am quite sure no heiress would have stayed at Cwm Bychan, save under lock and key, and these excellent people seem never to have stirred from the time of the Norman Conquest (though no Normans ever found them out) till her late Majesty was quite a middle-aged lady. Our old friend Pennant, 110 years ago, was so captivated by the romance of the thing that he rode far out of his way to spend the night with the Squire Lloyd of that day; and he has left us his pedigree, which some of my readers may like to see. Most, I fear, will skip it without hesitation. But here, at any rate, it is.

Evan ap Edward ap Richard ap Edward ap Humphrey ap Edward ap Dafydd ap Robert ap Howell ap Dafydd, ap Meirig Llwyd o Nannaw, ap Meirig Vychan, ap Ynyr Vychan, ap Ynyr ap Meuric, ap Madog, ap Cadwgan, ap Bleddyn, ap Cynvyn, Prince of North Wales and Powys.

"I was introduced," says Pennant, "to the worthy representative of this long line, who gave me a most hospitable reception, and in the style of any Ancient Briton. He welcomed us with ale and potent beer, to wash down the Coch yr Wden, or hung goat, and the cheese compounded of the milk of cow and sheep. He likewise showed us the ancient family cup, made of a bull's scrotum, in which large libations had been made in days of yore. The family lay in their whole store of winter provisions, being inaccessible a great part of the season by reason of snow. Here they have lived for many generations, without bettering or lessening their income, without noisy fame but without any of its embittering attendants."

One of them at any rate, Dai Llwyd, sought fame, beyond the marches, for he followed the banner of Jasper Tudor, and fought against Richard III at Bosworth ; and his absence seems to have been so remarkable an event and one of such importance as to inspire a bard to write a song called "Farewell Dai Llwyd," which is sung in Wales to this very day.

In the centre of this punch-bowl, and quite detached from the naked mountains that guard it, rises the Carreg-y-Saeth, or the "crag of the arrow," with much boldness to the height, perhaps, of a thousand feet above the lake which laps its base. And its name reminded the patriarch of Pennant's day to tell his guest that he had conversed with men in his youth who had seen wild deer grazing in the meadows. The Welsh of old time were, like the Normans, great sportsmen. The rules of the chase as propounded in the laws of Howell Dda, who was pre-Norman, are most elaborate. Unlike the Scottish Highlanders, who, in spite of the familiar and stirring cantos in the *Lady of the Lake*, as a matter of fact used no dogs in the chase, but drove the quarry when meat was wanted, by lines of beaters, into corners or corrals, the Welsh hunted always with hounds. Game was elaborately classified and, to some extent, protected ; no man was allowed to kill an animal on its form. Hounds and greyhounds were both used, the latter being slipped from leashes, and the rules to be observed by the various sportsmen who had dogs out, are extremely precise. Indeed, the old Welsh hunting code seems to have savoured somewhat of ultra red tapeism, for no one was allowed to carry a horn till he had passed an examination in the laws and objects of the chase. Nor, among other things, was the royal huntsman ever to swear an oath except by his horn and by his leash, a restriction that would go hard indeed with a modern M.F.H. ! However, it is quite certain that nowadays, "No hunter tracks the stag's green path," in the lonely hollows of Cwm Bychan, nor do any hoofs but those of the nimble mountain sheep tread the patchy turf that grows between its grim and naked rocks.

Strange to say, though, Cwm Bychan was a much more frequented place in the days of the Romans than in the days of the Lloyds, there is, in fact, only one method of egress to the east, and this is by way of that wild pass through the Rhinog mountains known as the Roman Steps, than which there is of a truth nothing more wonderful of the kind in all this country. For after following the infant Artro up towards its source, you suddenly find yourself treading on flat stones laid as a causeway over the spongy bogland. As the



Cwm Bychan Lake.

track trends upward through a scene of infinite wildness and a gap in the ridge of the mountains begins to suggest itself, the causeway develops into a regular ascending staircase of well-laid steps. As the defile grows narrower and the stairway steeper and even yet more perfect, one tries to pull one's self together and realise what it is that is carrying one up, without an effort, for a full mile to the summit of one of the wildest and remotest of Welsh passes. The carriage of ore or mineral wealth of some kind can be the only possible explanation of this

elaborate and lengthy staircase in such a place, and indeed there is a spot even yet upon the eastern side called the "field of the forges." Whether the treasures came by sea from Lleyn or from Snowdonia, in both of which districts the Roman miners were busy, is of little consequence. It may be permitted us, at any rate, to picture the long processions of British slaves toiling upward with their burdens beneath these sombre crags, or possibly leading packhorses, for the grade and the construction of the winding staircase would quite admit of this. There are people who are bold enough to say that these steps are older than the Romans: but that is perhaps only for the sake of argument, which is after all the very life of these excursions into unrecorded times.

But here we are, not only wandering about mountain tops, against the rules, but wetting our feet in the edge of the deeper water of prehistoric speculation, which is much more unprofitable. A good legend, however, is quite legitimate; so, as we have mounted thus high, and are looking out eastward over a country that suggests the tale, though an oft-told one, I must for that very reason not omit it. Now the right thing for us to do would be to descend into the boggy flats beneath, and to come back through the Rhinog range by way of the next pass to the south, which is regarded as the most savage and rugged in all Wales, namely, the Drws Ardudwy, or the "gate of Ardudwy." Once upon a time the men of this same sea-coast Cantref which stretches from the Dwryd to the Mawddach, ran short of wives, or perhaps they were not satisfied with one apiece. So marching as was their wont when bound for war, through this gloomiest of passes, between Rhinog fawr and Rhinog bach, they set their faces towards the distant Vale of Clwyd with a definite and clear purpose in their minds. Here, in that fat country, either by force or stealth, the incident of the Sabine women was sucessfully repeated. But the men of Ardudwy with their spoils had hardly got within sight of home when a lamentable thing happened. For

the fathers, husbands and brothers of the Vale of Clwyd, recovering from their first surprise, had followed them over the Hiraethog and across the sources of the Conway, and now fell upon them with such force and vigour near Festiniog that, they slew them to the last man. But the strangest thing of all is yet to be told, for it seems that either the fascinations of these warriors of Ardudwy were so irresistible, or else the life of a lady in the Vale of Clwyd was so intolerable, that the fair captives, on beholding the slaughter of their captors rushed



The Bridge of Llanbedr.

with one accord into a neighbouring lake, which is called to this day Llyn-y-Morwynion or "the lake of the maidens," and there dismally perished. As for the men of Ardudwy, the upright stones that mark their graves were not long ago quite thick, and some still survive as a terrible example to those who would break the tenth commandment in such violent fashion.

But we must take a jump back to the sea-shore, and to Llanbedr, where a charming little country inn, with the Artro leaping past its lawn, stands at the turn of our road and invites

the thirsty and the weary, and a row or two of new cottages shows that the summer visitor penetrates even here. The eight mile run to Barmouth hovers mostly between the marshes and the mountain slope, the sea glinting behind the vivid greens of these fat lands, with here and there a strip of sandhills or white pebble ridges to mark the limits of the tide. Sometimes we are down on the flat and can hear the drubbing of the pewits' wings, as they come wheeling close past us from the marshes, and then again are lifted up and treading on the mountains' toes, and can hear the calling of the curlews on the hill. It is not perhaps a country that a quick run through would fasten on the memory. The mountain tops upon one hand lie out of sight, while upon the other the sea is thrust so far back that you can in ordinary times scarcely catch the voice of the waves falling on the shore. But there is a great deal to be seen and done here by any one who would leave the road and ramble about the western slopes of these Ardudwy mountains. Few bits of Wales are richer in the relics of dumb ages, and grey-stones, that were not set in their present sockets by nature, are thick upon the land, besides camps and cromlechs without number; while out upon the higher slopes of Llawlech and Diphwys, you have half North Wales before you and a fine solitude around you, that even Barmouth in the season does not greatly modify.

And looking down upon Cardigan Bay, too, even from the higher points of this coast road, when the waves, that is to say, are still, and above all, when the tide is low, you will be little in tune with the folk-lore of the region if your thoughts do not turn towards the submerged cantref of Ardudwy, the drowned country of Gwaelod, that has lain now, this thirteen hundred years and more, beneath the sea. For in the reign of Gwyddno Garanhir, a fair land covered with villages spread out here, between the horns of Cardigan Bay, far into the sea. And it was guarded by artificial banks which were under the charge of one Seithenin, who on a fateful occasion took too much to drink, and left the water gates open, so that the Irish Sea rushed in and ir-

retrievably submerged the whole land of Gwaelod. I have said that at low tide more particularly, a glance seaward will not fail to recall the story of the ruined cantref, for a ledge of sand and stones can be seen stretching for miles into the bay, a line of surf marking its course clearly enough, and at certain periods, the wall itself showing high and dry above the waves. It is known as Sarn Badrig or Bad-rhwyg, "the ship-breaking causeway," as well it may be. From Towyn, twenty miles to the southward, another mysterious wall of a similar kind, Sarn y

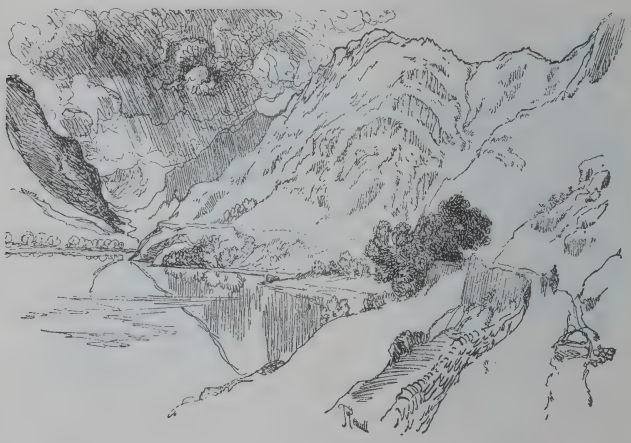


Suspension Bridge, Menai Straits.

Bwch, the causeway of the buck, runs out for as great a distance, trending at its point so near to that of Sarn Badrig that the narrow entrance is a source of infinite danger to those who are unskilled in the local navigation. The dangers of Cardigan Bay indeed account for its desolation in the matter of shipping. Strangers give these terrible causeways a wide berth, and woe betide the foreigner, who in a westerly gale, is driven within reach of the stone dykes of the drowned country of Gwaelod.

So far as local history goes, the whole seaward slope of Ardudwy, from the Mawddach to the Dwryd, seems to centre

in the old mansion of Cors-y-Gedol. For it dominated one of the few really great domains of bygone Wales, claiming at one time, it is said, the whole country between the estuaries. The Vychans or Vaughans were its owners in its palmy days, and enjoyed for generations the distinction which belonged to such broad acres. The old house looks towards the bay, standing near the mouth of a glen, down which the clear streams of the Ysgethin come leaping from two mountain lakes towards the sea. Upon one side of the road the ancient church of Llandewe suggests a



Llanberis Lake.

rare mausoleum of manorial bones, and a very treasure-house of Cors-y-Gedol memories. But the avenue that runs back from the lodge facing it hardly gives, perhaps, the impression that one of the proudest and oldest seats in all North Wales lies at its extremity. The woods for the most part are beaten and battered by the sea winds. There is nothing imposing about such park lands as lie round it. But the old house is charming and not altogether the worse, to my thinking, for its near contact with nature and its lack of those conventionalities of domestic

landscape that one has learnt to associate with the profits of Old Broad Street and Mincing Lane. It has passed through several hands since it lost touch with the old stock, and been much restored; but many of its fine rooms are still intact, and the gateway and courtyard leading to the door are still the pride of its possessors. Its once owner, Griffith ap Llewelyn, was Sheriff of Merioneth in the reign of Edward III, and his great grandfather was a cadet of the great Irish house of Desmond, Osborn by



The Harbour, Portmadoc.

name, who settled in this neighbourhood. And from these sprang the Vaughans, who lorded it right royally for many hundred years between the Rhinog mountains and the sea. One of them who sat in parliament for Merioneth in Charles the First's time was so fat that the folding doors of the House of Commons had to be both opened whenever he went in or out. As this was an honour otherwise conceded only to the Usher of the Black Rod, speculation used to be rife among the members when the doors flew open as to whether it was to herald the entrance of the Welsh knight or the Black Rod.

Charles II once slept at Corse y Gedol; the room is still intact, and till quite recently the bed itself was carefully treasured. But as the house is not shown to strangers, it would be futile to dwell longer on its interior.

Sea and mountains draw nearer together as we approach the bold corner of the Mawddach estuary, to which Barmouth clings. We leave the remains of Llanegrin Abbey embodied in an old farmhouse upon the left of the road, and upon the right, a full mile short of the town, stands its old parish church Llanaber, poised above the sea upon a sloping, crowded churchyard. No one should pass it by, for it is one of the oldest buildings in North Wales and one of the most beautiful specimens of the early Gothic to be found in the country. Signs of Barmouth, which has been almost wholly built within this century, and mostly in the latter half of it, are now thick before us. The castellated villa with which the Lancastrian of the last generation loved to decorate the coast of Wales is painfully to the fore, and glares in unabashed fashion at one from sites that are worthy of a Harlech or a Conway. But I will spare the reader any of Barmouth's architectural details. Nature has been so lavish hereabouts, and is on so great a scale, it matters little what type of tenement the visitors that flock in summer to the foot of this mountain promontory take shelter in.

The large new church however is really a very fine affair, its situation most effective, and the pink and grey stone of which it is built extremely pleasing. It was the scene some seven years ago of a terrible calamity. Great efforts had been made to raise the large sum of money necessary for building a church big enough for present and even more for the future needs of so popular a watering-place, and at the same time one architecturally worthy of the situation. It had just been completed when all Barmouth was startled from its bed one night by a most unearthly crash, and hurried out to find its fine new church a heap of ruins. The setting of the corner stone

of the central tower upon a sloping rock seems to have been the cause of the calamity, and I do not think it would have been well for the builders of the church to have been in the near neighbourhood of Barmouth upon the following day, for people of all denominations had put their hands in their pockets and from every variety of motive. I have stood inside the present church with the good Rector, who was naturally the working head of the whole movement, and heard him tell the harrowing tale. Never surely, in this



Llanaber—Old Parish Church or Barmouth.

particular line, was there quite so hard a case. Let any country clergyman who has just accomplished his heart's desire consider for a moment what a blow was this. But in the direness of Barmouth's extremities a good angel arose. A local lady, who had already been of vast assistance, stepped once more into the breach, and behold! the finest modern church west of the Vale of Clwyd.

But we have really no business with modern churches, only pausing before this one, on account of the tragedy it recalls.

Unless indeed, the further fact is worth noting, that Barmouth boasts three striking types of as many periods in ecclesiastical architecture : the new church already dealt with, Llanaber noticed but not done justice to, as one of the most perfect of the earlier buildings, and lastly the Georgian edifice at the foot of the town, which as a specimen of that debased period would for unmitigated homeliness be very hard to beat.

Nothing, however, can do much to make or mar Barmouth, or as the Welsh more rightly call it Abermaw. It is overawed by mountains up whose steep slopes the jerry builder cannot readily climb, though triumphant on the strip beneath, and is

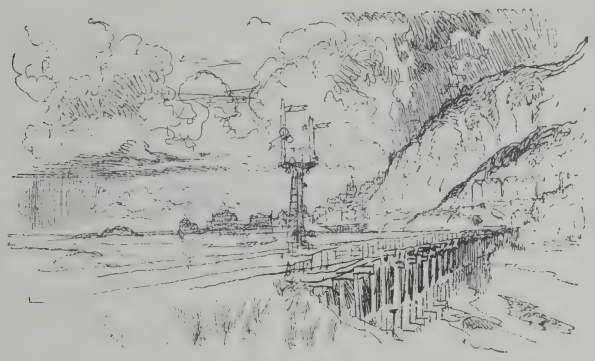


Looking up the Estuary from Barmouth.

washed upon one side by the sea, and upon another by the restless waters of its incomparable estuary. A large proportion of those people who know Wales intimately would probably rate the estuary of the Mawddach when the tide is high as the most beautiful spectacle to be seen in the whole of this beautiful country. Mr. Pennell thinks that it is even better at low tide, when gleaming lines of golden sand are thrown out one behind the other from spur to spur. Like that of the Dwryd, but on a larger scale, the estuary of the Mawddach and the Wnion, for it belongs to both, cuts deep into the mountains, the tide flowing three parts of the way to Dolgelly, which is ten miles

inland. Both roads and railroad traverse this exquisite route along the shore line; but it is the outlooks from Barmouth itself that are above all, perhaps, preëminent. A long bridge for both trains and foot passengers crosses the estuary near its mouth, opposite to the town. "There is not such a promenade in Europe," declares a well-known guide book with pardonable enthusiasm. I, at any rate, would not criticise such fervour, and I dare say, if the scene were in Italy, no one would.

It would be difficult at any rate to conceive any river mouth from which one could look inland on a more beauteous com-



The Bridge at Barmouth.

bination of lowland richness and upland grandeur, though to take in the whole wondrous scene at a single glance and to the greatest perfection, the panorama walk just above Barmouth should be sought. Hence you may look down on what at high tide is a blue lake, somewhat less than a mile wide in most parts, and some half a dozen in length, winding between steep shores where rocky crags and wild woodland alternate with the rich luxuriance spreading around the country houses that nestle in the bays. And above all this wealth of wood and water and rock and meadow, blended in a fashion so exquisitely

unconventional, uncommon and indescribable, are always the great mountains, climbing heavenwards. The triple peaks of Cader Idris look close at hand thrusting out the high tributary ridge along the southern shore of the estuary, that cloven by many a shadowy hollow, falls, over against the town of Barmouth, with much boldness and from a great height, into the sea. At the head of the lake, the twin peaks of the Arans lift their distant and more misty forms against the eastern sky; while, pressing close upon the rich fringe of the northern



Barmouth.

shore, the mountains of Ardudwy are well worthy to match the rugged summits of the Cader range which faces them. This futile effort to describe the Mawddach estuary leaves out all mention of the wealth of detail that charms and delights the traveller as he follows the Dolgelly road which curves around the indented shores through scenes of ceaseless beauty. There are roads up both the northern and the southern bank—both of them, more especially the former, of the first quality, and almost equally beautiful.

Barmouth, it must be confessed, is a little too popular in August to be at that season a pleasant place of sojourn. In May and June, however, it is quiet and delightful, and in winter boasts a climate that for mildness has no superior in the island; while the beauty of its outlook, though the quality may change, is not of the kind which comes and goes with seasons. Some day, perhaps, this warm and sheltered corner may become a winter resort. There is no seaside town in Wales and most certainly none in England where a wintry sun lights up a scene so infinitely grand.

Even before the railroad ventured beyond Shrewsbury, Barmouth was a popular place, but in a quiet and select fashion. Even honeymooners of quality came here in post chaises, taking Llangollen or Bettws y Coed en route. Reading parties from Oxford and Cambridge revelled in its primitiveness and, I have no doubt, astonished the natives from time to time with many original performances. Indeed I know they did, for I have gossiped much with the ancient inhabitants, upon whose minds such things made a lasting impression fifty or sixty years ago. There is a house in Barmouth even yet called informally the Collegian's house, having once been a favourite with University men, who if they are living might well be great grandfathers. But those were the days when people came to places with a view to a lengthy sojourn. There were no "week ends" for humble or hard-worked folk, while those who were more fortunate had not been bred to restlessness, and indeed when they found themselves in good quarters had every incentive to stay in them.

CHAPTER XVIII

DOLGELLY—TALYLLYN—TOWYN—ABERDOVEY

THE old road from the Ardudwy coast villages to Dolgelly gave a wide berth to the then unimportant Barmouth, turning off through a pass in the mountains before reaching the mouth of the estuary. The portly squire of Cors-y-Gedol, spoken of in the last chapter, was accustomed to be carried over this steep route in a sedan chair when he journeyed to London for his parliamentary duties ; and the rows of pack-horses, trailing up the now grass-grown track, were vivid memories to men not a great while dead. In ancient days, travellers in Wales, whether bent on peaceful or warlike errands, were given to keeping high up on the hillsides. The valleys were neither easy going, nor were they safe. Even the Roman causeways ran, for the most part, far above the modern routes of travel. The two delightful roads, that follow the banks of the estuary from Barmouth to Dolgelly, are at any rate wholly modern, and cut through a bosky fringe of country between the mountain and the water, that counted for little in bygone Welsh life, and was rarely trodden in the days of old. If only one of these can be accomplished, though both are lovely, that on the north shore should be taken for preference. For though the mountains on the Ardudwy side are fine enough ; yet from the road they actually overhang, which looks over a continuous and exquisite foreground of wood and rock and water, you have the great glories of the Cader range piled all the time against the sky.

Some two miles short of Dolgelly, the road emerges from the scarcely broken roof of verdure with which the feet of the Ardudwy mountains have covered it, on to the wide green flats, where the Mawddach and the Wnion meet. Here stands the idyllic village of Llanelltyd with its ancient church and churchyard looking down upon the peaceful meadows through which the first of these rivers steals in quiet streams and bubbling salmon pools to meet the tide. And here, too, upon the further bank, nestling beneath the steep green hills of Nannau,



The Road to Dolgelly.

stand the ruins of the Cistercian Abbey of Cymmer. One's thoughts on beholding its situation go back instinctively to Valle Crucis, and one's loyalty to that stately ruin as the most ideal abiding place of monks and abbots in North Wales for a moment wavers. This would be a hard matter indeed to decide, but as there is so much more left of the fabric itself at Valle Crucis, and its Abbey was so much the more important, any comparison may on that account, perhaps, be waived. As Valle Crucis was founded by the Princes of Powis in 1200, so Cymmer was built by the grandsons of Owain Gwynedd, King

of North Wales, just two years before, and became to the land of Mawddy and Ardudwy, what Conway was to the north shore, and the great Llangollen Church to eastern Powisland.

The ruins are now enclosed in the old farm buildings of Vanner. The refectory and the monks' dormitories are even yet in good preservation, and indeed in constant use. Of the Abbey itself, the east end and a considerable extent of the walls are still standing, and being overhung with ancient trees, and thickly clothed with ivy, make an exquisite picture in such a setting of wooded hills and mountain peaks that is here laid around it. Cymmer derived its charter from Llewellyn the Great, and Henry III, during his wars with the Welsh, captured it upon one occasion, and, it is said, was only prevented from burning it down by the payment of a large ransom.

The narrow valley of the Mawddach, which cuts into the mountains on the north and almost at right angles to the estuary, is among the most beautiful and most notable of Welsh glens, and a first-class road runs up it for five miles to a romantic and picturesque inn which, at Tyn-y-Groes, looks down over a wealth of woodlands to the river chafing on the rocks beneath. It is beyond this spot and near where the river forks, that the gold-mining of which much has been heard from time to time, disfigures the scenery, while a copper mine enjoys the unenviable distinction of having polluted one of the most pellucid and romantic rivers in North Wales, the only river too, that I know of in all this country that has been thus abused; for the once bright Mawddach now goes leaping down its winding glen from Tyn-y-Groes to Cymmer, a torrent of thick milk. A melancholy and repulsive spectacle is this for those who can remember the days of old, and such as makes one wish there were a cursing well about, like that of St. Beuno at Clynnog, into which one might drop a coin or a pin, and consign the desecrators to some fate worthy of so heinous a deed. If the filth had actually killed the fish, something more effective than even a cursing well would have of course been

brought to bear ; but both trout, sewin and salmon, though they cannot see to rise at a fly, contrive somehow to exist under these depressing conditions. This fact, I believe, makes the vandalism technically legal.

At Cymmer we are standing near the fork of the letter Y. The stem represents the estuary, and the arms the two rivers flowing into its head. Dolgelly lies close by, to the right, on the banks of the Wnion crouching beneath the rugged and fantastic slopes of Cader Idris. The angle between the streams is completely filled by the great hump of woodland park and pasture, on whose summit, nearly a thousand feet above the estuary, stands, not only the highest, but one of the most famous and most ancient country seats of North Wales, that of Nannau. It is not so much the fabric itself, but the memories connected with its romantic site, and the antiquity of the Vaughan family, who have dwelt up here since time was, that have given Nannau such distinction. Above all it is the scene of a most memorable incident in Owen Glyndwr's stormy life.

For it so happened, that in the heyday of Glyndwr's glory the then owner of Nannau was his own cousin, Howel Selé, who by no means sympathised with either the doings or the aspirations of the Welsh patriot leader. This bred bad blood, as was natural, between the relatives, which the excellent Abbot of Cymmer, deeming a lamentable thing, he conceived the praiseworthy notion of bringing them together again. Glyndwr was consequently induced to visit Howel at Nannau, and his conciliatory overtures being apparently reciprocated, the two men went for a walk together in the park lands below the house, the lord of Nannau, at any rate, being armed with his bow. Seeing a fine buck grazing within shot, Glyndwr suggested to his cousin that he should take this opportunity of exhibiting his marksmanship. Whereupon Howel, lifting his bow made feint to bend it at the deer, but turning suddenly round, discharged the arrow full at Glyndwr's breast. Either by rare

forethought or great good luck, the Welsh leader had a shirt of mail beneath his tunic, and the arrow fell harmlessly to the ground. The fate of Howel, however, was swift and terrible, neither his wife nor family nor any of his friends ever setting eyes upon him again. It is supposed that the two men and their attendants forthwith engaged in deadly combat; Glyndwr, at any rate, proved the victor, and not satisfied with that, he burnt the house of Nannau to the ground, and its remains could still be seen in the last century. What had become of Howel or of his dead body remained for a generation a mystery.



Low Tide in the Estuary below Dolgelly.

Forty years afterwards, however, near the spot where he had been last seen, a skeleton, corresponding to the proportions of the missing man, was discovered in a hollow oak tree, and according to some versions of the legend there were those still living who could and did, explain how the vanquished Howel had been placed there dead or alive by Glyndwr.

The old oak, which stood at no great distance below the present house, lived on into this century, and was an object of pious horror to the natives of the locality. It was known as the "hollow oak of demons" and terrible sounds were

heard issuing therefrom by all such as were so hardy as to venture near it after dark. Sir Richard Colt Hoare, the famous antiquary, was by chance a singularly appropriate and sympathetic witness of its collapse. Happening to be on a visit to the Vaughans of Nannau, the oak was then, he tells us, twenty-seven feet in circumference ; and on the 13th of July, 1813, on one of the sultriest days he ever remembers, he made a drawing of the old tree then in the last stage of decay. That very night, unscathed by lightning and untouched by winds, it collapsed from sheer old age. The fancy of Scott, when he came through this country, was greatly taken by the tale and the mystery that for so many centuries hung round the spot. In writing *Marmion* he recalled it to mind—

> All nations have their omens drear,
> Their legends wild, of woe and fear.
> To Cambria look—the peasant see ;
> Bethinks him of Glyndowerdy,
> And shuns the spirits' blasted tree.

It is nearly two miles from the lodge at the foot of the hill to the mansion at its top. The woods and flowering shrubs, through which the various drives wind and climb, are luxuriant and beautiful. The broken nature of this mountain park too, with a natural tarn nestling in a wooded hollow near its summit, and the amazing outlook over a veritable fairyland of glen and mountain, make one wonder if there be many other historic families who possess so uniquely beautiful and so proud a perch. It is not surprising that people from all parts of Britain find their way to this enchanting spot, and follow a somewhat giddy path, known as "the Precipice Walk," which has been cut for their benefit around the crown of the hill. For here Cader Idris rises immediately facing you in grand and rugged majesty, showing its whole mass, from the grey roofs of Dolgelly and the leafy gorges of the Wnion far beneath, to the three craggy peaks which leap so high into the sky. From here too may be seen the whole estuary of the Mawddach, gleaming seawards between its

soft wooded promontories and shaggy cliffs, with the mountains of Ardudwy piling up against the west, and the beauteous gorge of the Upper Mawddach glowing and narrowing above the silver thread of the stream towards the north. There again is the humpy back of Moel Offawrm, "the Hill of Sacrifice," showing quite near to us, with the further peak of Rhobel fawr bounding the view. Much more than this is seen that to the eye is beautiful, but in the telling would grow tedious.

I have no doubt a chapter or more could be written on Dolgelly. The pulse of Celtic Wales beat high enough in these sombre little grey towns, which after all were, in olden days, scarcely more than gathering points whither men flocked from castle, cottage, farm and manor house. The walled towns of the Denbigh and Conway type, the "English towns" of Edward the First, are another matter; but of these others, of purely native origin, there would be little left, if the additions of the last hundred years or so were swept away. In old Dolgelly, however, such as it was, Glyndwr held one of his parliaments, and for long it was a great rallying point for his North Welsh adherents, and from here he wrote those notable letters to the King of France, which speak so eloquently of the power he had made himself. Nowadays it is a quaint and rambling collection of grey-walled slate-roofed houses, surrounded by leafy and attractive villas that the beauty of North Wales gathers round all such little towns. But the charm of the capital of Merioneth —for thus much honour belongs to Dolgelly—is so great in the matter of its situation, that it would be absurd to linger over its unpretentious architecture. Cader Idris, as I have said, springs magnificently from its very doorsteps, while the clear streams of the Wnion, after long and plaintive burrowings in the wooded gorges of Pont Newydd and Dolserau, sweep under its ancient bridge and out into the daylight.

Merioneth was one of Edward the First's five counties, but it was a straggling, ill-shaped, unmanageable affair. It was ill conceived too, and rode roughshod over ancient cleavages, for it

touched Llangollen, while it included Harlech, and stretched southward even to the banks of the Dovey. Flint and Anglesey, Carnarvon and Cardigan were in a sense compact and homogeneous. But Merioneth took a bite out of two ancient and rival kingdoms, Gwynedd and Powys. It almost felt the English border, while at the same time it looked upon the sea, and was broken up moreover into a chaos of hills and mountains running in various directions. Great estuaries in primitive times and mountain ranges made common-sense boundaries that law-makers and map-compilers took long to leap. From the Mawddach estuary northward to Snowdon stretched Ardudwy, "the land of the sons of Conan," as Giraldus Cambrensis rightly calls it. South of the estuary to the equally significant barrier of the Dovey, stretched the cantref and lordship of Mawddwy, clearly destined by nature and common sense to be a district to itself. The one had been in the kingdom of Gwynedd, the other formed the western extremity of Powys. Edward brought them both into his new Merionethshire, or tried to. But there is reason to believe that the landowners of Mawddwy remained a law unto themselves for generations, and that the King's writ had uncommonly little significance till the murder of Lewis Owen, Vice Chamberlain of North Wales, and Baron of the Exchequer, in 1555, on his way to the assizes at Dolgelly, stirred the authorities to vigorous action. No particular inconvenience, however, now arises from the awkward shape of Merioneth. Its rugged mountains are pierced by roads, its valleys rattle to the railway train: its people no longer remember the differences between Gwynedd and Powys, or meet the officials of the North Wales circuit with cross-bows and daggers.

If the "Gwilliad Cochion Mawddwy," or the red-headed banditti of Mawddwy, who for the best part of a century after the wars of the Roses, held this region in terror, were still about, this road would be an ill one to travel, that twisting up as it does behind the back of Cader, takes us over the lonely pass

which leads down to Talyllyn and the Dysanni valley. The scene is bare and wild enough as we drop down from the watershed; naked mountains rising sharply from the rough road upon either hand. A high rock above us is called Llam y Lladron, or "the Thieves' Leap," in reference to some vague tradition that malefactors were once flung from its summit. Another is called "the Rock of the Harp," from its likeness to the form of that instrument. Here again by the roadside is a small, bleak tarn called in Welsh "the Lake of the Three Grains," the grains being represented by three large rocks which the giant Idris,



The descent to Talyllyn.

from his mighty seat above, is supposed to have found in his shoe and cast there in a passion. Llyn y tri Graienyn, however, commonly known as "Pebble Pool," is a mere pond, small, clear and shallow; and around it hangs a somewhat curious tale.

Now no fish of any kind swim in its waters, though in that fact no one who passed by it on the road would think there was anything in the least remarkable. Twenty-five years ago the pond was regarded, as in this respect, quite barren, and being by the roadside this emptiness was a matter of common knowledge and

observation. One day, however, a well-known resident while driving by, saw, to his profound astonishment, what he believed to be, though he could scarcely credit his eyes, an enormous trout. Now the beautiful Lake of Talyllyn, with its snug fishing inn, lies at the foot of the Pass, and most charming does



On the banks of the Lake.

it look from here nestling down below amid the encircling mountains. At Talyllyn there were staying at that time, as there always have been staying, for the last seventy years at any rate, during the angling season, several expert professors of the gentle art. To one of these, a well-known *habitué*, then and even yet of these waters, the witness of this marvellous apparition

in the Pebble Pool, at once carried his strange tale. The angler, though greatly doubting in his heart that such an unlikely thing could really be, nevertheless hied him, without loss of time and armed for the fray, to this lonely pool at the head of the Pass. Fishermen may perhaps be interested to hear it was a minnow that he first presented to the notice of this uncanny beast, if such a beast indeed there really were. The matter was not long left in doubt, for, strange to say, the very first cast of the minnow corroborated the wayfarer's tale, and proved conclusively that it was no phantasia begotten of Scotch whisky or of Dolgelly cwrw. To shorten my story, a brown trout of over five lbs. in weight was hooked and safely brought to the bank, and his lifesize picture hangs framed upon the wall of the little coffee room at the Tynycornel inn, upon the banks of Talyllyn, just below, where all may see it; and a 5 lb. trout among these mountains, is a veritable whale indeed. But, after all, the real point of the story is that this leviathan was conclusively proved to be the sole inhabitant of the pond. How long had he been there? Where did he come from? How old was he? And had he cleared out all other denizens of the water when he greeted the very first appearance of that deadly minnow with such effusive joy? As this problem has been discussed with much diligence for a quarter of a century around the social and experienced hearth of the "Tynycornel" and not yet solved, we need not, I think, attempt to grapple with it here.

I do not know whether Talyllyn, along whose shores we are soon travelling by a roughish road, or Nant Gwynant, whose banks we skirted in a former chapter, is the most beautiful of the smaller Welsh lakes. Both are about a mile in length, and respectively fill their narrow valleys. The one laps upon the feet of Snowdon, the other upon those of Cader Idris. The charm of verdure, of trees and meadows and sequestered homesteads, rests upon both their banks, and the majesty of the noblest and most rugged of Cambrian heights soars

heavenwards above either; for the crown of Cader is a pile of crags, and its southern side precipitous and sombre to a degree. Talyllyn, to be sure, is less of a highway, though nowadays, as you drift down the centre of the lake, you may often hear in the holiday season the coach horn sounding from the shore. There are two inns, old-fashioned and picturesque, that in themselves harmonise with the profound peace and the tranquil beauty of the spot. And a church, some three hundred years old, stands where the little river, leaping from the end of the lake beneath a stone bridge, goes flashing down a meadowy vale. It is a place sacred to anglers, though the invading char-à-banc from the distant sea coast causes in the busy season much concern to the ancient *habitué*, as his boat drifts slowly up the lake before a south-west wind, and he thinks sadly of the days of old. For a man may be scarce past his prime and yet have been privileged to know these parts before a railway train came nearer to them than Shrewsbury. And what times they were in North Wales—for trout and prices and simplicity—if all we hear be true! But there is peace to be had still on most occasions, and assuredly no less loveliness than of yore, at Talyllyn, and there are trout still in tolerable plenty, though their education, like that of the rest of the world, has infinitely progressed. In an old visitors' book at the little inn there is an entry, made nearly fifty years ago, which sets one thinking, and is a curious comment on the perennial vigour of the "laudator temporis acti." The ink is faded with age to a pale yellow, but the writer says that he has fished the lake for forty years, and wants to know the reason of its great falling off! And yet what feats have been performed in days long subsequent to that, and which seem to the rising generation not only amazing in their achievement but almost prehistoric in their date, and are certainly no longer possible.

The Dysanni river, as I have said, leaps from the lake, below the old church, and goes sparkling downwards for four miles through a narrow, meadowy valley, and we keep near its banks

upon a road of most unexpected excellence. On our right hand the lower ledge of Cader rises steep and green. Upon our left is a rugged ridge 2,000 feet in height, and wonderfully bold and stern of aspect, till at a point some four miles below the lake, the little village of Abergwynolwyn marks the parting of the ways, —the river following one of them, while the direct road to Towyn and the sea-coast, eight miles distant, takes the other. This last one keeps the line of the aforesaid ridge, which, breaking hereabouts into forms less stern, swells seawards in a long succession of green and lofty crests. Here, too, is the terminus of one of those miniature narrow-gauge railroads which penetrate the Welsh mountains and carry both slates and passengers through many a fairy scene. But at Abergonolwyn, charming as is the straight run to the sea, and excellent the road, and restful to the eye the smooth green swell of the mountains, rent here and there by the wooded course of spouting streams, I would at the same time urge the traveller to face a much rougher road for part of the distance, and follow the river round its longer course.

The Dysanni is not among the well-known rivers of Wales, but it is certainly among the most lovely. Its course is short, for it rises, as we have seen, in the lap of Cader, and it meets the tide beside the woods of Peniarth, not half a dozen miles from the western base of that aforesaid glorious mountain. Its vale is deep and winding, rich and wooded. The romantic village of Llanfihangel stands on a confluent near its head. Llanfihangel means the church of St. Michael and All Angels, and there are many of them in Wales. The scant remains of an ancient pre-Norman Welsh castle, once, according to the greatest antiquary in Wales, who lived and died at Peniarth just below, the largest in the country, looks down upon this one from a lofty perch. The Craig-Aderyn or "the Rock of Birds," lifts an isolated form of surpassing boldness, some six or seven hundred feet above the woods and meadows through which the lustrous river flashes. Around its

precipitous sides cormorants and other sea fowl, besides birds of the hawk tribe, gather at eventide in great numbers and with much commotion. It is a strange sight at sunset to see clouds of birds winging their way from the sea five miles distant, as they have doubtless done through all ages, to gather round the lonely crag which rises so high above the vale and yet so isolated from the surrounding mountains.

Peniarth is one of the historic seats of Wales, and is still held by one of its most ancient families. It lies upon the flat amid thick woods. The hills rise boldly upon either side of it; the Dysanni, meeting here the influence of the tide, and ceasing to be a mountain stream, winds noiselessly, a torpid, reedy current, around its boundaries. Nor is it of less interest from the fact of its late owner, Mr. W. W. E. Wynne, the greatest and most enthusiastic of all modern Welsh antiquaries, having made it a treasure house of books and manuscripts relating to the ancient tongue of Wales, and having gathered together a library that is famous wherever Welshmen congregate.

It is an easy run for four miles along the level, wide expanding, breezy, meadow-carpeted valley to Towyn. Dear ugly old Towyn! In what gaunt and hideous and garish fashion do the walls of its chapels and lodging-houses rear themselves against the sea line! A rare mark for the west winds to hurl their load of rain upon in stormy autumns, and for melancholy to brood in at such depressing periods, and think sadly of the joys of home. But Towyn does not stake its reputation on such trifles. To begin with, it has some wonderful sands, though they do not look out on anything particular, except a shipless horizon behind which Ireland lies, and are in consequence apt to be depressing to those who have outgrown a passion for wooden spades and buckets. Towyn is also beyond a doubt the most bracing place on Cardigan Bay. So once upon a time people of quite a select description, whose quivers were tolerably full, used to seek this quiet spot, where bands and

trippers were unknown, and turn their offspring on to the shore while they themselves devoted, for the most part, their attention to the glorious country inland. There were scarcely any houses upon the quiet foreshore in those days, but a pleasant common, bordering on the sandy beach, seemed to complete the sum total of juvenile safety and content. But in an evil hour the controllers of Towyn's destinies conceived the notion that its hour for encouraging brass bands and promenaders had arrived, They disregarded the warnings of its old patrons, the quiver-



Towyn.

fuls, and also the fact that few spots upon the Welsh coast were more ill adapted for drawing the gay and the gregarious and those to whom the negro minstrel is dear. I do not like to quote from memory the sum said to have been expended in turning the foreshore end of the common into a conventional promenade. But it is at present one of the most melancholy esplanades in Britain. The old *habitués* fled long ago in disgust from their mutilated playground, while the lovers of brass bands and promenading have as yet shown no hankering to foregather

on a strand that from their miserable point of view is melancholy and forlorn. Towyn, say its people, is now in a transition state; and seems likely enough to remain in it for some time. It is off, in fact, with the old love, but not yet on with the new. All this, however, has nothing to do with its famous church of St. Cadvan, one of the oldest in Wales, and thought by many to be an actual fabric of pre-Norman times. Whether the massive pillars and arches are Norman or British, however, there is a stone column, now lying in a corner of the church, which arouses the curiosity almost more. It once stood upright in the churchyard, and bears an inscription which has been thus rendered :—

"The body of Cyngan is on the side where the marks will be. Beneath a similar mound is extended Cadfan. Sad that it should enclose the praise of the earth! May he rest without blemish!"

Now Cadvan was a saint of the sixth century, who, like so many others, came to Wales from Brittany, and Cyngan was a local prince who co-operated in the founding of the church: four upright stones marking their grave may yet be seen outside the west door.

Leaving Towyn with its fresh breezes, its lovely inland views of Cader, and its beautiful river, to consider whether it has made the most of all these things, we must get round the range that followed us from Talyllyn and now divides us from the Dovey estuary. To do this and to reach Aberdovey, whose situation has a singular resemblance to Barmouth, we have only to follow the excellent coast road which skirts the base of the hills, and looks down over drained marshes, where black cattle are feeding in great abundance, towards the sea. In less than four miles we have turned the corner, and may stand as soon as we choose upon the wharfs of the little fishing port and modest watering place of Aberdovey, and look out over the blue water, and gleaming sands of the river's mouth, to the bold headlands of the Cardigan coast, which hide Aberystwith from our sight.



Aberdovey.

As Barmouth clings to the feet of the Ardudwy mountains at the northern point of its estuary, so clings Aberdovey to the lower ledges of the green hills of Mawddwy, in the same relation to the mouth of its own river. If one had not come straight from the unrivalled beauty of the more northern estuary, one would wax enthusiastic over the charms of this one. For here also are hills and mountains, in plenty, to be seen on all sides. Here are fair shores, rich in woodland and well sprinkled with country houses. Here, too, are wooded knolls and rich tinted headlands upon the north bank, thrust out into the blue water, as at Barmouth, and sweeps of golden sand gleam against the verdant colouring of the distant marshes.

But the mountains do not drop into the water, and fill the eye, and dominate the whole scene, as in the other. Across the estuary is South Wales, and behind a narrow stretch of lowland, the Cardiganshire hills sweep away in billowy ridges towards the smooth crown of Plinlimmon, which, though not actually visible from this point, is nevertheless the king of all. The harbour bar is a mile from the town, and in rough weather there is a fine line of raging surf joining the sandy points and fighting with the Dovey's outpouring streams. On the hither side of the river mouth there is a great waste of sandhills, tossing ridges of bent grass, and scant pastures which were the scene of the now ubiquitous golfer's first invasion of North Wales. Beyond the mouth stretches far along the sea coast the great green marsh of Fachno. Along its further edges, skirting the wooded feet of Cardiganshire hills, you may see the white smoke of the trains, toiling with their heavy freights towards Aberystwith. Outlined between plain and sea the scanty houses of Borth, where Uppingham school, in Dr. Thring's time, took up its abode for a year or two, and caused some flutter in this little corner, till then unheard of, leaving it under the impression that a great destiny as a watering place lay before it.

As for Aberdovey it consists, in the main, of a long row of houses, extending for half a mile or more along the river bank.

Many of these are of recent date, and are obtrusive caterers for the passing visitor. But Aberdovey is not a fashionable place, and upon the whole has a local and not unpicturesque look suggesting the notion that its tastes are nautical, and that it does its chief business upon great waters; small craft of all sorts lying at anchor in the river beside its single street, or drawn up on the steep shelving beach. Nor is the impression altogether a false one. For men who have sailed round the world at the mouth of the Dovey are not uncommon, and veterans may be found sunning themselves upon the seats overlooking the river, who ask eager questions about foreign news, but know nothing of intermediate education, and have a proper contempt for Board Schools. "Do you see that boy, Sir?" said one of these ancients to me the other day, pointing to a lanky youth of some fifteen summers sprawling over the bottom of an upturned boat. "He's never done a half-day's work in his life, Sir; and do you think he's likely ever to learn to do a good whole day's work now, at his age?"

But this is rank heresy in North Wales, where education, with a very big E and a very accentuated "shon," is the sure road to a social and material Utopia. I have as a matter of fact considerably toned down my Aberdovey friend's views on the matter, which are pronounced, and have only alluded to them as a curiosity within the Calvinistic fold to which he belongs.

How about the "bells of Aberdovey"? is an inevitable query at such a moment. The Aberdovey people are hard put to it for an explanation of the song that has given them such measure of fame as they enjoy beyond the bounds of Wales. Unhappily, there was no church in the place till recent times, the inhabitants in old days walking all the way to Towyn: a rise in the ground, from which the approaching worshippers first caught sight of the tower of that venerable building, being still called Bryn Padria, signifying the spot where the devout ones among them paused to say their "paternosters." But the Aberdovey church itself is only about forty years old;

so where and what were the bells? A pretty explanation suggests that the old song was a metaphorical allusion to maidens' voices sounding across the water. Another tale runs of a great giant, perhaps Idris himself, who carried a huge bell in his hand, and was wont to wade across the estuary at low water. One day, however, by some mischance he was overwhelmed by the tide and drowned, and his bell is said to sound over the sands at certain hours and seasons.

The ledge on which Aberdovey stands is so narrow that its



Aberdovey from the back.

more pretentious residences are forced to find perches for themselves on the steep slopes behind. Above these, fine sheep-walks stretch upwards and away in the direction of Cader Idris, and once on the top you may walk over twenty miles of turf or heather without ever descending into any serious form of civilisation, or encountering any one but a shepherd or a hill-farmer and his dogs. From here, too, you may look far into Cardiganshire, and into almost, another land from that more rugged and more immediately striking one that we have so long been exploring. Not that the physical difference between North and South Wales is the point I would make; for the latter,

which few outsiders know, maintains an average of natural beauty much higher than is generally suspected. But the cleavage between the people of the two sections is very great —much greater than in general statements is admitted. That the people of Anglesey should be more like those of Aberdovey than the folks yonder across the river, whom you, can almost see with a naked eye going about their business, seems incredible. But I believe this is not very wide of the mark. At any rate, without quibbling as to the matter of a mile or two, South Wales generally not only speaks a different dialect of Welsh in its Welsh-speaking districts, but carries a population by no means wholly sympathetic or having like characteristics with those north of the Dovey.

With the exception of a single county, the one now before us, the southern far more than the northern half of the Principality, has been subjected to English and alien influences. Half Pembroke for eight centuries has been wholly Flemish and Saxon, and no more Welsh in blood or speech than the people of Hampshire. Radnorshire has so completely forgotten the native tongue, that it cannot even pronounce its place names properly. That most of Carmarthen, much of Brecon, and eastern Pembroke are as Celtic in their way as Carnarvon, is neither here nor there, though their way, if the paradox be admitted, is different. A North Welshman of the Shropshire border, and of the further end of Lleyn, talks practically the same dialect. But Welshmen from either side of the Dovey, allowing a little latitude, do not readily understand each other, and at the best use a vastly different accent and a greatly differing dialect. Each affirm they speak the purest tongue. To cite their arguments would plunge us into philology and worse; so I will content myself with saying that North Wales is generally thought to have the best case of the two. When South Walians go north as curates it is a familiar pleasantry that they prefer to speak English whenever possible, lest they should provoke ridicule by their accent. But language is not by any means the only difference. The South Welshman, though upon the whole, inferior in physique,

is held to be a cheerier, a more humorous and a less prejudiced person—more tolerant, more open to conviction. The North Walian, on the other hand, affirms that his compatriot of the south is less staunch and reliable, a mutual estimate which, read between the lines of local prejudice, would seem to corroborate the opinion of the outside observer. It is quite certain the North Walian takes even more readily to Calvinism, and has allowed it to influence his whole life in a fashion that people may criticise or admire according to their temperament. He is at least consistent. Religion with him is not only a Sunday matter, but its exercises are more often than not the recreation, to which the small farmer or country tradesman turns naturally in his spare time and on his holidays. If this devotion to the chapel is sometimes due to mixed motives or to social pressure, the fact is not so obvious as among other communities. But, as I have already observed, the rising generation are beginning to think that some greater measure of worldly amusement, such as they see falling to the lot of others, should be theirs. The South Walian, being naturally then more volatile, is less austere in his ways of life, and, as some people would say, more liberal in his views.

But Cardiganshire though it is essentially South Welsh, it claims to be, and with good reason, a land unto itself. No county is more homogeneous, more isolated and purely Welsh. It is large and populous, and perhaps of all counties the least touched by English influences, being at the same time almost wholly agricultural, and, except at this corner around Aberystwith, entirely outside the tourist traffic. Welsh is spoken from end to end; and though it may seem impossible that there could be any regions more completely Welsh in every detail than most of those lying back from the roads we have been traversing in this book, there are yet those who declare that Cardiganshire is in some ways of all Welsh counties taken as a whole the most completely typical and representative. Should you ask a Welshman outside Cardigan what are the chief products of that great county, he will instantly reply, "Pigs and parsons." It is certain that it supplies the Welsh Church with a very

large proportion of its clergy, and these, curiously enough, are frequently the sons of Nonconformist farmers. The Cardiganshire farmer is thrifty even above Welsh thrift. He has long held it as an object of common ambition, whatever be his own persuasion, to have at least one son in the Church, and for this he will make great efforts. Lampeter, moreover, being within the county limits, stimulates the tradition. And it would be strange under these conditions, if, in this, though the most isolated of all Welsh counties, Church and Chapel were not upon better terms than elsewhere. But seeing that it is outside the limits of North Wales, I have already spent too much time upon this country beyond the Dovey. So we must take the road which, skirting for some miles the leafy coves and bays of the northern shore of the estuary, at length breaks inland on its level and uneventful way towards Machynlleth.

A startling instance of the ignorance that prevails even in high places upon Welsh matters, occurred in the debate on the Benefices Bill last June. A distinguished Liberal statesman, and actually member for a quasi-Welsh constituency, showed himself to be labouring under the amazing delusion that the services in the parish churches of Welsh-speaking Wales were conducted officially in English, Welsh services being only grudgingly and sparingly conceded. Having discovered this astounding mare's nest, the right hon. gentleman waxed naturally indignant as well as eloquent over it. And there being no kind friend near enough to pluck his sleeve, proceeded to put his foot into it even yet more lamentably, denouncing in fervent language the present practice of "sending men down to Welsh parishes stuffed with Latin and Greek and ignorant of the language of the people."

The House apparently preserved its decorum through this singular exhibition, and an honourable member, with much forbearance, then explained to the chief that Welsh was the regular and official language of the Church throughout Welsh-speaking Wales, and that English services were only conceded as a voluntary extra by the parson when there was a justifiable demand for such. The notion of the Welsh country clergy as aliens, unnecessarily weighted with classical erudition, and ignorant of the Welsh tongue, is altogether delightful. Welshmen at any rate forgot for a moment their political differences, and shared in the enjoyment of what really was an excellent joke, perpetrated so unconsciously too by one of the wittiest Englishmen living.

CHAPTER XIX

MACHYNLLETH—DINAS MAWDDWY—BWLCH-Y-GROES—LLANUWCHLLYN

As I have told in a former chapter the Welsh version of Merlin's origin it would be ill passing in sight of the village of Taliesin, lying just across the Dovey, under the Cardiganshire hills, without a word about the famous seer and bard who named it. It was in the days of Maelgwyn that noted King of Gwynedd, in the sixth century, that Gwyddno Goronhir—a sub-prince of his kingdom—had a son named Elphin, the unluckiest youth that had ever been known in Wales. It is said that the drowned Cantref of Ardudwy had been his share in his father's territory; and in other things evil fortune had so dogged his steps that Gwyddno, in pity for his son, had granted to him the annual dragging of a certain famous and prolific weir, at the mouth of the Dovey. Why this weir was only netted once a year I do not know. It would be a blessed thing for people higher up the river if the present owners of the Dovey estuary followed the example of Gwyddno Goronwy. At any rate this annual operation never failed to produce at least a hundred pounds worth of salmon, a prodigious sum in those days. But when the unfortunate Prince Elphin, full of confidence in the unfailing harvest, proceeded to gather it in, he and his servants, were filled with grief and consternation at the result; for when the net was brought ashore, lo and behold there was not in it so much as a single fish, and Elphin sat himself down, and began to think now in all seriousness that life was no longer worth living; and his servants and the people about him were

almost frightened that the ill-luck of a single man could destroy, as it so seemed, a fishery that had never been known to fail.

But just as they were bemoaning this evil fortune, Elphin espied a leather wallet, suspended to one of the poles of the weir; and he remarked, in sorrowful jest to his downhearted people, that there might after all be the value of a hundred pounds in that unpromising looking casket, and he bade the keeper of the weir go bring it to him. And they opened the leather bag, and to their amazement found a youth alive inside it; and his forehead shone with such a lustre that the man who opened it exclaimed "Taliesin" (what a radiant brow!) "Taliesin then let him be called," said Elphin; and he took the boy sorrowfully in his arms, and placed him behind him on his horse, and rode slowly homewards. And as he went along at an easy pace, the late inmate of the leather bottle, who had been so mysteriously washed up by the tide, began to address his deliverer in an impassioned ode, which is still preserved. Here is the beginning and end of it, as translated by a Welsh lady of the last century

"Elphin! fair as roseate morn,
Cease, O lovely youth, to mourn.
Mortals never should presume
To dispute their Maker's doom.
Feeble race! too blind to scan
What the Almighty deigns for man.
Humble hope be still thy guide;
Steady faith thy only pride.
Then despair will fade away,
Like demons at the approach of day.

. . . . .

Behold me, least of human kind,
Yet heaven illumes my soaring mind,
Lo! from the yawning deep I came,
Friend to thy lineage and thy fame,
To point thee out the paths of truth,
To guard from hidden rocks thy youth,
From seas, from mountains, far and wide
God will the good and virtuous guide.

. . . . . .

Elphin ! fair as roseate morn,
Cease, O lovely youth ! to mourn.
Weak in my leathern couch I lie ;
Yet heavenly lore I can descry.
Gifts divine my tongue inspire ;
My bosom glows celestial fire,
Mark ! how it mounts ! my lips disclose
The certain fate of Elphin's foes."

So Elphin, marvelling at the supernatural gifts of the infant with the radiant brow, carried him tenderly home, and gave him to his wife to care for and bring up. But his father jeered at him much, saying, "Alas ! what will this child profit thee ?" And Taliesin, to Gwyddno's amazement, took upon himself to answer that question : "He will profit him more than the weir ever profited thee." Whereupon Gwyddno, taken vastly aback, laid himself open a second time to the little creature's rebukes saying : "Art thou able to speak, and thou so little ?" And Taliesin answered : "I am better able to speak than thou to question me." And he broke out again into verse, which caused all around to marvel. Henceforward Taliesin became the good genius of Elphin, causing him to prosper wonderfully and in due course found his way to the court of the Emperor Arthur, at Caerleon, and became, as we know, one of the greatest of British bards, and presided over the chair of the round table at Caerleon. Finally let any one who has not read that inimitable work of Thomas Love Peacock —*The Misfortunes of Elphin*—lose no time in doing so, for they have a treat in store.

There is not much to detain us at Machynlleth. It is a typical little Welsh town, just within the limits of Montgomeryshire. It manufactures some flannel and is greatly given over to church and chapel rivalries, and lies on the flat meadow lands of the Dovey, pressing against the low hills that are the outworks of the Plinlimmon range. The gates of Plâs-Machynlleth, a seat of the Marquis of Londonderry, open on to the very streets of the town, which are wider and more cheerful than one usually looks for in North Wales. Machynlleth, however, has filled a

big place in history; for Owen Glyndwr, during his successful years, made it his capital. In 1402 he summoned a parliament



Machynlleth.

from all the counties in Wales, having successfully repulsed Henry IV., and being practically the ruler of the country. The old house where these native legislators gathered is still standing

nearly opposite to the gates of the Plâs, but it has long been adapted to the needs of a private residence. Tradition too points to a building, still called the Royal House, where the Welsh chieftain is supposed to have resided.

It was to this parliament that David Gam came, with fell intentions of assassinating Glyndwr. Now Gam was a landowner of Brecon, and quite a famous character in his day. He was a close adherent of Henry IV., having been long attached to his father's household. When Glyndwr, however, became for a time the ruling power in Wales, Gam feigned conversion, and came to Machynlleth with the rest of the Welsh gentry. It was an audacious intention, and one almost forgives the treachery in the devotion to the house of Lancaster which inspired so desperate a venture. But Davy or Syr Dafydd, as the chroniclers sometimes call him, was not as cautious as he should have been with regard to his intentions; and Owen, coming to hear by some means what these were, had his would-be assassin seized and thrown into prison. He spared his life, perhaps with the notion that an indefinite imprisonment of the sort that obtained in those days would be the more complete revenge. So Owen kept Davy Gam under lock and key for ten years it is said, rejecting all overtures for his ransom, of which the King himself made several. Poor David must have led a miserable existence, particularly during the time when Owen himself was being driven and pushed through the mountains. He recovered his freedom, however, in time to be welcomed by Henry V., the son of his old patron, and to accompany that great monarch to the field of Agincourt, where he fell gloriously by the King's side. But Glyndwr was not satisfied with keeping Gam a prisoner, for the next time he passed through Brecon he took his house Cyrnwigen upon the way for the especial purpose of burning it. And the story goes that while Owen was watching with much enjoyment the flames leaping and crackling, Dafydd's steward arrived upon the scene, and upon this the Welsh leader, though so great a patron of

bards, for the first and only time himself, so far as is known, burst into verse, and thus addressed the farmer of Cyrnigwen in an englyn of which the following is one of various translated.

> "Shouldst thou a little red man descry,
> Asking about his dwelling fair,
> Tell him it under the bank doth lie,
> And its brow the mark of the coal doth bear."

For Davy Gam, it may be noted, had a cast in his eye, and red hair, and was of short stature. He is supposed to be the original of Shakespeare's Fluellen and is said to have been knighted while dying on the field of Agincourt.

The Cambrian Railway, which runs down from Welshpool to the coast, and thence up it, clings to the river, as does the road which, with Dinas Mawddwy for our goal, we follow for some half a dozen miles to Cemmaes. There is much that is pleasant during this smooth and undulating run on which to rest the eyes. Low hills are upon our right, shutting out from view the great Plinlimmon wilderness, while through leafy hollows and past snug grass farms come rippling brooks to meet the Dovey, that upon our left sweeps from side to side of a broad meadowy vale, its silver streams. A famous salmon and sewin river is the Dovey, as well it may be, with so fine an estuary below, and such grand pools above, palpitating with perhaps the very clearest water to be found in all Wales. It is a little early yet, not for the fish, who begin to run from the sea in later June, but for the full array of rods that you may see waving along its banks in the holiday month of August, between Machynlleth and Cemmaes road. I should not like to say how many I have sometimes counted from the train window, when an August flood is fining, lest the local authorities should fall foul of me for diminishing the attractions of their tickets and licences, which all who will may buy, and may in truth draw prizes with, for there is no doubt about the fish.

Now it has always seemed to me a wonderful thing that an average golfer, to say nothing of a duffer, should so often betake himself, with the world to choose from, to some celebrated and crowded Links, where the moment of his start from the tee is regulated and posted up the day before, and he becomes the centre of a procession, and possibly spends his day being pressed by scratch players, or chafing behind a pair of worse duffers than himself. There is of course no need to go to Wales in order to find sufficient peace and quiet, with other conditions quite good enough for the average player. But if the reader who is as yet unconverted to the popular pastime of the hour will pardon the digression, I should like to say that North Wales has three centres at least,—namely, Conway or Llandudno, Harlech, and Aberdovey,—where the golfer will find all that he desires in the shape of eighteen-hole courses, laid out over a true golfing country and well kept. Of these the first is the most bracing. Harlech slightly the best and the most frequented, and having probably the most beautiful outlook of any green in Britain; while Aberdovey is the oldest and quietest; and, having said so much, it would not be fair to omit all mention of Rhyl and Barmouth, as having tolerable facilities of this kind to offer to the visitor. The rest, as the saying goes, is silence; though by no means so as regards the advertisements by which hotels and watering places recommend themselves to the world.[1]

All this, however, should really have been said while we are still upon the coast; but, as a matter of fact, it was the congestion of ardent salmon fishers that I have sometimes seen on the Lower Dovey that reminded me of my omission. At Cemmaes Road we leave the railway, which here begins to mount the steep gradient to the cold heights of Llanbrynmair and Carno. Our own road following the Dovey swings to the north, and entering Merionethshire again soon brings us to the hamlet of Mallwyd, with its curious old church and cluster of grey cottages.

[1] Since this was written things have progressed, but Harlech still holds the lead, and, *cæteris paribus*, must ever be the most attractive.

Nor must I forget its fine old-fashioned hostelry, the Peniarth Arms, that thrusts its rambling and ivy-clad walls out into the angle where three roads meet. The vale of the Dovey has here narrowed almost to a gorge. The river is no longer curving leisurely over a pebbly bottom through broad pastures, but is tumbling just below us over limestone rocks and shooting between mighty boulders where the gathered moss sparkles from the spray of the river and the drip of the overhanging trees.

The Peniarth Arms is a place where fishermen greatly forgather, for the Dovey hereabouts is not open to all the world who choose to pay for the privilege, as it is lower down. The situation too is delightful, lifted as it is some hundred feet or more above a wooden glen, and looking down the valley towards Cemmaes, and up to the defiles of Dinas Mawddwy, and across to the immense green walls of the Ddolgoed mountains that seem, when mists are rolling in from the sea, as they so often are in these glens, to touch the very skies. Let us drop down for one moment to the river, for there is just here on its banks a fair natural lawn, shaded by a grove of tall and stately oaks. Sweeping its edges and breaking on a strand of shingle and tumbling over ledges of blue-grey polished rocks, and beating on the far side against banks of ferns and the roots of overhanging alders, goes the crystal water, taking every colour from the rocky bottom and every shadow from the quivering roof. How it throbs and bubbles and steals and swirls and rushes and roars, now white as gin, now green, now amber, now glittering in a wreath of foam, now sulking in a deep pool of inky blackness, where flakes of creamy froth go circling round in never-ending eddies.

Approach carefully and look intently into the depths of that amber-tinted pool, whose surface is so troubled that the rocks and gravel at the bottom, though vaguely visible, have a blurred and shifting look that tires the straining eyes. For some time you will see almost nothing, till bit by bit the bottom of the pool will begin to discover itself and take shape and form,

and a shadow perhaps will faintly flit across a pale coloured rock, or a yellow gleam of gravel. Keeping your eye upon the spot, the dark streak will drift over it again, and in a short time where it had lately seemed impossible to discover anything beneath the shifting, scintillating surface, you may make out with entire distinctness the length and goodly proportions of a noble salmon. If your eyes and ardour are equal to the search, you will probably discover its fellow somewhere near it, and two or three sewin perhaps lying at a respectful distance in another chamber of the pool. And even as you look a king-fisher will perchance dart downwards through the leaves, or a white-breasted ouzel take its perch upon a mossy rock, or a sandpiper go fluttering by in great commotion, as if you harboured designs against its four or five fluffy young ones, that have not yet ventured from the snug hole in the hollow bank where they were hatched.

The men of Dinas Mawddwy and this upper end of the Dovey valley have had for all time a somewhat lawless name, and people will tell you in the vague fashion that localities speak of one another, that they are a century behind the rest of Wales. The lordship of Mawddwy was in fact not really united to the county of Merioneth till Henry the Eighth's time; and even then, as has been already mentioned, its inhabitants cruelly murdered Lewis Owen, vice-chamberlain of North Wales, and that not two miles from the spot on which we are now standing. For in the year 1554, our old friend Sir John Wynn, under commission from the Crown to stamp out the lawlessness of the district captured no less than eighty miscreants, many of whom at the hands of Judge Owen in his official capacity suffered the extreme penalty of their crimes. An old dame, the mother of one of these, piteously besought the judge to spare her son; but he well knowing the man to be one of the worst of the gang, had stoutly resisted the woman's importunities. The latter, finding at length, that these were of no avail, tore open her kerchief in a

rage, crying out, "These yellow breasts have given suck to those who shall wash their hands in your blood." The outlaws vowed vengeance, and upon Christmas Eve of the same year lay wait for the judge as he was returning from Montgomery assizes through the woods of Mawddwy. Barring his path with fallen trees, they assaulted him of a sudden with showers of arrows; and these not immediately taking effect, they fell upon him with bills and javelins, leaving him dead, with thirty wounds on his body, and the spot to this day is called "Llidiarty Barwn." His son-in-law John Lloyd of Ceisgwyn defended him manfully till the last, but the rest of his attendants fled at the first onslaught.

The district still bears traces in a modified form of the old lawlessness. It has the reputation, for one thing, of breeding the most determined fish poachers in Wales, and that is saying a great deal. Many more salmon, trout and sewin, beyond a doubt, fall to the share of the midnight spear, the gaff and the net of the poacher, than to the fly or minnow of the gentle angler. It is in the blood of the people; and the magistrates of Mawddwy, and indeed of many other parts of Wales, some of whom are very beacons and shining lights of local morality, would seem to do their best to encourage poaching, by the deliberate and significant leniency with which they treat offenders. A section of the Welsh bench one might almost suppose made it their special and tender care that the idle loafers who net, lime, otter, and even dynamite the rivers and lakes of the country shall be shielded from every penalty that the law and the common sense of every civilised country enacts. In many places they will rally in force to a case of this kind, as if to ensure that the professional depredator, the wholesale ravager of streams that would be otherwise prolific, shall be turned loose again, with a trifling fine, that isn't even paid by the culprits themselves, and is regarded as an excellent joke. Yet some of the gentlemen who evince such sympathy with this particular form of law-breaking would most certainly hold up

their hands in horror if these same ruffians came to chapel on Sunday on a bicycle. This attitude is the more strange too, since the fish poacher's trade, besides being illegal, is supremely and entirely selfish. He kills fish wholesale on their spawning beds in the hills, and pockets the money he receives for their unwholesome carcases. In the numerous streams that are open to the humble as well as to the richer class for fair fishing, he takes no heed that he is destroying the frequent pleasure of a score or two of people, when he puts his miserable net into the holes and scoops out every trout, in order that he may sell them in the nearest town for money that he is too lazy otherwise to earn, by working on a farm or quarry. The Welsh fish poacher is, in fact, the worst kind of enemy to the honest folk around him, who look to the tourist business to bring in an annual harvest; for the fisherman is no unimportant item of it, and the rumour of regularly poached waters drives a large share of custom from a district. Poaching pheasants damages a single individual; but fish poaching in North Wales harms an entire neighbourhood and all classes of individuals: and is followed by the lowest and worst of the community, without even the excuse of want of employment. On this side of the question, however, there is nothing particularly strange; but the really curious part of the business is the amazing short-sightedness and the unaccountable sympathy for these pestilent law-breakers that animate what may be called the popular side of the Bench. The weapons used by the Dovey poacher are the big stones that form the bed and shores of the stream. The heedless pedestrian coming at night on one of these marauding parties would be greeted by volleys of these; and if he fancied, as is possible, that he was merely the sport of some village urchins, and pressed on to vengeance, he would very soon find out his mistake. A watcher or keeper is powerless against these combinations: and what encouragement indeed have they to risk their lives, when a conviction results only in fines such as the offenders themselves laugh aloud at in the very court itself?

I spoke of Harlech as being the smallest of places to have enjoyed civic distinction. Dinas Mawddwy too is but a trifling village; and though it never aspired to be a county or assize town, yet it once had a mayor and aldermen, the former in Pennant's time being the blacksmith. I should imagine it to be a unique case of its kind, and that it arose out of the patchwork government of North Wales in the middle ages, for there is, I believe, no trace of a charter from any king. The village functionaries who bore these fine titles exercised a sway only over the large parish of Dinas Mawddwy, which runs for many miles up the deep thinly-populated gorges which here converge, and over the pathless hills which rise up on every side. The stocks were standing till quite recently, and were in frequent use by this rustic Corporation, as may well have been seeing what an unruly community they had to govern. A court leet, is still held twice a year at Dinas Mawddwy by the Lord of the Manor, and fifty years ago the hapless Jack Mytton of Halston was the squire. Many of those pranks which helped him to get through a large fortune and brought to the dust an ancient name were performed here. His biography has been written and may be read, though what purpose either process can serve it is difficult to conceive, unless as a warning which was not, I fancy, the motive of his admirers, if such there could be, for attempting his immortality. As a sportsman he was certainly neither an Assheton Smith nor a Hawker, and how he used to go out shooting ducks in his nightshirt at Christmas and ride his horse upstairs and over tables for wagers is not the sort of thing that is congenial food for contemplation in the presence of scenery so sublime as that among which Dinas Mawddwy nestles. For there is no place I think in all Wales quite so hemmed in by overshadowing hills.

Now we might, with more comfort, slip over the lesser pass, the Bwlch Ooeddrws, to Dolgelly, wild and high and beautiful enough though even this is; but I have undertaken to

carry the reader over the other and greater pass, the Bwlch y Groes, that leads northward to the head of Bala lake, which is twelve miles distant. I will say at once that the strongest cyclist will have to walk about three miles of it. It is the highest driving road in Wales, touching at its loftiest ridge an altitude of 1800 feet. A smooth green hill, if it is high enough, which is seldom, and steep enough, and the sun is shining on it, impresses one, I think, in a fashion almost as much as sterile crags. Now, Dinas Mawddwy, nestling beside its sparkling river and narrow strip of meadow, seems literally buried beneath the immense and overhanging hills. Upon every side spring up these steep green walls, looking from below as if a sheep could scarcely scale them, and yet overlaid from base to summit with a coat that after the summer rains, which are seldom lacking, might be taken for the softest and richest velvet. Here and there is the gash of a half-worked quarry, or an outcrop of precipitous rock. But for the most part there is little to break the surface of these wonderful green steeps which seem entirely to cut off the little townlet, with its quaint traditions of doubtful and eccentric characters and lawless ways, from the outer world.

The red-haired banditti of Mawddwy may well have laughed long at all attempts to drive them from such defiles. And, indeed, as we emerge from the enclosures of the narrow valley five miles above Dinas, and face the open and precipitous terrors of Bwlch-y-Groes, we feel thankful to be living in the nineteenth century, with all its drawbacks. It is called a mile from here to the summit of the pass, but measurements are sometimes foolish and deceptive things. The road must climb at least 1000 feet in this distance, so the steepness of the grade may be readily calculated by any one who likes to put the difficulties of the ascent into figures. But the grandeur of the scenery cannot be reduced to mathematics, nor can it readily be put in words. The wall that frowns down upon the pass is no longer carpeted with velvet, but becomes a rampart of almost naked

rock, rising precipitously above the infant Dovey, which leaps in thin cataracts down a bare channel at its rugged feet. This fierce cliff, for there is scarcely a touch of verdure on it, must rise eight or nine hundred feet above the trough-like glen below, and cleaving its centre comes down in what looks from our side to be a single continuous cataract, the eastern fork of the new-born river, a long white shimmering trail against the grim precipice.

We shall have paused so often to take breath before reaching the summit of the Bwlch that I will say nothing about the wonderful backward view which will to a surety have been well imprinted on the memory. Before us, however, is a long stretch of wild moorland over which we might try to make some speed, but the road itself is indifferent. The solitude is intense ; it is rarely indeed that you meet a human being treading this steep track. It is heavily metalled, too, and the rough stone will lie there for years upon the road for all that either human feet or passing wheels may do to level it. Away to the right stretch the great moors of Montgomeryshire. To the left the mountains of the Aran range open deep their lonely valleys, and thrust their rock-crowned heads 3000 feet into the sky. Before us far away, and beyond, Bala lake, the Big Arenig and Rhobell Fawr shut out a world of moorland stretching to the Conway. The small mountain sheep lie about the road, and spring away with nimble foot through the heather as if a traveller were a rare and startling sight. The white-backed wheatear shows infinitely greater confidence, and flits along the wall beside us. The curlews make their wild music, beginning afar off with their plaintive pipe, and as they come forging nearer breaking into those prolonged half-shrieking notes of alarm that seem so fitly to fill the measure of a mountain solitude. Let us pray that the skies be clear and the sun be shining, as we drop down the narrow road cut into the face of the precipice on the Bala side of the watershed. The road itself is good, and not so steep but that you may ride down it.

There is no wall upon the left, however, and to go over would mean a broken neck. Far above the road in threatening attitude springs a pile of cliffs, ragged and fierce of aspect, from which fragments are continuously plunging headlong, as is evident enough from the debris that lies upon the steep slopes below the road.

Passing under this precipice when rains have been lashing the earth around these boulders, it is well to keep your eye upon the heights above. And yet this is a pity too; for the vale below, which may be seen winding downward to the head of Bala lake, whose blue waters are all but in sight, is one to fill the eyes with a great sense of calm and space, and beauteous colouring, and altogether a scene of rare delight. Here, again, beyond the valley and the glittering thread of the newly-born Twrch, which twists along its flat bed, is one of those vast upland sweeps of green, stretching to the blue skies. At no long intervals it is cloven with glens which deepen and darken as they draw near the valley meadows, though always showing the white trail of a cataract fed by the rivulets and bogs above. But up behind these verdant ridges, high though they are, the peaks of Aran, at a greater distance and of a colouring and contour wholly different, shoot up another thousand feet or more into the sky. From the frequented regions round Dolgelly and the coast these fine mountains look bold and high and green. But from this little known back country they show a heap of rugged rocks, to which ferns cling in patches, or sheer cliffs, where no foot can tread, nor living plant grow, and where the falcon breeds, and its clamorous young make weird music amid the echoing crags, through the long days of early summer.

It is a four-mile run down the narrow valley of the rushing foaming Twrch to the head of Bala lake, where lies the charming village of Llanuwchllyn. It was near here, and at the foot of Aran Benllyn, that Spenser has placed the

home of King Arthur, in his childhood, Timon his foster-father, as we shall see, living close by.

> "His dwelling is low in a valley greene,
> Under the foot of Rauran[1] mossy hore,
> From whence the river Dee as silver cleene,
> His tombling billowes rolls with gentle rore,
> There all my dayes he trained me up in vertuous lore."

Three considerable streams run through Llanuwchllyn to feed the lake, which is a mile below it. It is the middle one of these, the Dwfrdwy, or the Little Dee, which the Great Western railroad, climbing upward to the wild watershed, before dropping down to Dolgelly and Barmouth, follows, that enjoys the distinction bestowed on it by Spenser. An old cottage, still called Llys Arthur, or Arthur's Court, crouches in the valley, with the peak of Aran Benllyn towering to the south, and the infant Dee prattling by the door. The Dwfrdwy has yet to go through Llyn Tegid, or what is generally known as Bala lake; so that there might be just dispute why this one, rather than the larger and more beautiful and longer streams of the Lliw from the north-west, and the Twrch, which accompanied us hither from the south, should claim the honour of being the source of holy Dee.

I have used the epithet "sacred" so often while wandering by the lower and broader streams of this famous river, it seems right that some explanation of its claim to sanctity should be forthcoming. But that is just what is beyond my power to give. That the Dee, however, was always regarded as a sacred river is a fact too often emphasised, in prose and verse, from earliest times, to have any doubts upon. It is only left us to speculate vaguely on the cause. Llanuwchllyn, which means "the church above the lake," lies in a flat valley, a green and dry extension as it were of the level of Llyn Tegid, which

[1] Aran Benllyn.

can be seen sparkling beyond its farms and cottages. The village is within two miles of the watershed, between the streams which eventually run into England and those which travel their short impetuous courses to Cardigan bay. Being some 600 feet above the sea, with the whole length of the lake upon one side, and a fairly open valley narrowing into a gorge descending to the coast upon the other, it has probably one of the best climates of any place situated upon a main line in North Wales. Three valleys, as I have said, meet here, one of which we have just descended, and the others, the Dwrfdwy and the Lliw, are each well worth exploring. It is striking to stand upon some elevation,—the slightest will be sufficient,—and see the three streams, after their long boisterous voyage through mountain glens, winding gently like silver streaks through the green meadows of Llanuwchllyn, and losing themselves in the shining lake beyond.

Llanuwchllyn, however, is little known. A fertile and home-like valley, surrounded by mountain, lake and moorland, with Arenig Fawr lifting its double peak on one side, and the mighty Arans upon the other, it seems to me to have a special charm of situation. But with the exception of one of the best kept small hotels in North Wales at the station, and one or two private houses in the village, there is no encouragement held out to visitors, in what is really one of the most attractively situated villages in the country. Plenty of objects of historical and legendary interest too lie around this end of Bala lake. I do not call a gold mine an object of interest, unless for the fact that the one in the glen of the Lliw, near the village, was known to the ancient Britons. But at any rate it does not pollute the limpid waters of the romantic stream that plunges past it, so let us hope it pays. Above it, however, nobly poised upon a spur of the overhanging mountain, is Castell Corn Dochan, a mere heap of ruins, that speaks vaguely to us of the pre-Norman period, and was a stronghold of the princes and chieftains of ancient Wales.

Now in the beginning of this journey I committed myself to a statement which I am only too delighted to recant, and that here, at this very village of Llanuwchllyn. I am quite sure that nineteen Welshmen out of twenty would have spoken with the same confidence that I did, and as I felt justified in doing after so many years of Welsh wanderings; and this relates to the extinction of the old beaver hat worn formerly by the Welsh peasant women. I have now seen with my own eyes two old women wearing them at a funeral in Llanuwchllyn, and that



Road to Lake Bala.

only just in time to save a mistake going irretrievably into print, which, though entirely venial, I should have been sorry for. Both these old ladies were over eighty-five, and I am quite sure many Welsh and other readers interested in Wales will be glad to hear that three or four of these wonderful and characteristic hats are still occasionally to be seen in Bala market. One would have looked for such things rather in the farther ends of Lleyn, or at Dinas Mawddwy, or in Anglesey. But Bala, though so linked by railroads with the outer world, sometimes claims to be the heart of Welsh Wales, and these

surviving hats are certainly a tremendous argument in favour of its pretensions. For I need hardly say there is not the faintest suspicion of posing among these aged ladies from the hills. Nor have they anything in common with the elaborately bedizened female who sits throughout the season beneath a tree in front of the Goat Hotel at Beddgelert, and does a thriving business with the tourists.

But there is a farm-house on the road to Bala, about a mile from Llanuwchllyn, called Caergai that is worth pausing to take note of. It is of the Tudor style, and has a history; for Vaughans lived here for centuries, and it was burnt by the Parliamentarians in the Civil War. The John Vaughan who flourished immediately after this was a well-known poet as well as a somewhat erratic character in his day. For an old story tells how, though a married man, he adventured as a soldier upon foreign service and was away for many years, sending back no word or tiding of himself, and very nearly suffering the penalty that so often attaches to such thoughtless and foolish persons. But deciding on a sudden to revisit his home he stopped upon the last stage of his journey at Rhiwaedog, an ancient manor still standing at the further end of the lake. And here, waking very early in the morning, he heard a great stir in the house, and inquiring the reason, was told that the heir of Rhiwaedog was to be married that day to the heiress of Caergai —in other words, to his own wife. Thinking the best place to put a stop to this would be at Caergai itself, John Vaughan hurried on his clothes, ordered his horse, and made best pace along the shores of Bala lake till he had arrived at his own door. Here being unrecognised by the domestics he was refused entrance, on the plea of the preparations that were going forward for the wedding of their mistress. He managed, however, after a time, to gain admission, and remained in the background till the dancing had begun. He then asked for a harp, and played a spirited Welsh air, which seemed to affect the bride with intense emotion, so much so that some of the visitors

interfered and peremptorily ordered this inconvenient stranger out of the house. But Vaughan upon that stood boldly out and sang a Welsh verse, which the present vicar of the parish, who has not only written a short history of the district, but a good deal of more extensive and useful historical work, thus translates—

> "If while away I lost my wife,
> My own Angharad Fychan.
> Go out yourselves. I will not lose
> My home, my harp, my hearthstone."

The agitated bride was asked which of the two men was to be ejected, and she intimated that her first husband was to remain, and it must be confessed this was somewhat hard luck for the heir of Rhiwaedog.

Caer Gai is supposed to have been the real home of Gai or Timon, King Arthur's foster-father. But its chief interest lies in the fact of its having been the home of John Vaughan, the father of the hero of the adventure just related. An eminent Welsh author was this gentleman, and translator of many pious books into Welsh, with a view of enabling his poorer countrymen to have the benefit of their contents. He became an officer in the army of the King at the outbreak of the Civil War, and had his house burnt over his head, being himself carried prisoner to Chester, where he was kept for three years immured in the Castle. His estate was confiscated, but regained after much loss and litigation. There are several Welsh inscriptions on the walls of the house which in recent years has been exactly remodelled on the one he built. Here is a translation of one of them—

> "Give praise to all ungrudging,
> And love thy common brother,
> Fear God, for this is good,
> And yield the King his honour."

This same road, and a most admirable one it is, carries us along the lake shore for another five miles to the town of Bala.

The whole lake, the proper name for which is Llyn Tegid, or "the beautiful," belongs to Sir Watkin Wynn, as well as much of the country around its head. His shooting-box, Glanllyn, lies pleasantly among the woods sloping down to the water. Other less noted country houses and old-fashioned farms, with their surroundings of wood and pasture, slope down to the shingly shores, on which for most days in the year and with most winds the waves of this large sheet of water are beat-



"The Last of the Hats."
Llanuwchllyn, 1898, from a photograph.

ing with no little commotion. Across the lake, which is less than a mile wide, the high green moors are sweeping and swelling above the rich strip that fringes the water. Within a mile of Bala, its old parish church of Llanycil, a long low picturesque fabric, stands in most peaceful and idyllic fashion upon the very shore of the lake, whose dancing blue waves form a rare background to the dark yew trees, and the grey roof of the time-honoured building in whose crowded churchyard such a store of

local memories sleep. There is sailing and boating in plenty on the lake, though no steamers or steam launches are haply permitted to ply upon it. It is famous also for its pike and perch, and a certain number of trout manage to lead a precarious existence alongside of their most ruthless and deadliest foe. But there is a fish called the gwyniad, which Bala alone, I think, of all waters in Great Britain possesses; and it has been there so long as the longest records tell of. A herring perhaps would best describe its size and appearance. Like the delicate white fish of the Canadian lakes, it is not to be beguiled by any bait, but is so tender that after a storm numbers are found dead upon the leeward shore, killed by being dashed against the rocks; and, more curious still, many, when hunted by the fierce pike, fling themselves in their panic on to the gravelly strand and die there, unable to get back.

CHAPTER XX

BALA—LAKE VYRNWY—LLANFYLLIN

BALA is really quite a unique place among Welsh country towns. It has the easy peaceful look of a large village, and as the only street of which strangers probably carry away any recollection is of generous breadth and fringed in boulevard fashion with trees, it has a general air quite unlike the little cramped grey towns we have hitherto paid flying visits to. Then again, being near the lake shore, the neighbourhood of so large a sheet of water, simmering, or whitening, or trembling beyond the grey gables, is a feature wholly unlike the pent-up rush of a salmon river, or the prattle of a trout stream, such as lulls to sleep the good folks of most Welsh market towns. Bala, on what may be called its off-days, and they of course are in the great majority, is more placid and peaceful than any even of these. It is a great gathering place, however, for Welshmen of all kinds and degrees, and can put itself *en fête* for a protracted Methodist meeting, or an Eisteddfod, as vigorously as the best of them. There is really not very much of Bala itself; what there is, however, is pleasing, and its surroundings are delightful; while its only street worth calling such has the look of existing for the entertainment of the country, rather than of doing business with it.

If I were asked off hand what Bala was noted for, I should probably reply: "Grouse, theology and cwrw-dda." So far as the first of these products is concerned, the little town is

surrounded upon all sides by the finest moors in Wales. Behind the strip of rich civilisation which fringes its lake, and the narrow valleys falling into it, great solitudes roll away for interminable distances. Particularly is this the case to the north and west, where the railway route from Bala to Festiniog is probably the wildest and most impressive hour of railway travelling in England or Wales. The shooting box to which the lessee of a Scotch moor transports himself and party for a long period is little in evidence here It is not required. Welsh moors,



Llanycil Church, near Bala.

when leased by strangers, are comparatively accessible from their own roof-trees ; whence they make several brief campaigns during the season, utilising hotels, farmhouses, or even temporary huts. So Bala is very wide awake during the latter half of August, and alive with sportsmen, dogs and keepers.

As for the two other staples that the name of the place suggests, I trust I shall not be suspected of insinuating any connection between the theology and the cwrw. Indeed, in regard to the latter, it is no suggestion of intemperance I would insinuate ; but I wished rather to be complimentary

towards the solid, cheerful, old-fashioned hotels, which behind their fringe of rustling trees give Bala street such a hospitable look.

Nor is it with any particular or special application to Bala that I would choose this moment to pay a special tribute to the excellence of the Welsh as hosts. Whether male or female, whether in hotel, farmhouse, or ordinary lodging; they are of the very best. So much nonsense is sometimes talked about the Welsh character, I feel glad to have had an experience large enough to enable me to speak with some particular confidence on this side of it at any rate, and to find that others familiar with the country are of the same mind. A few seaside places in the season naturally excepted, Wales is a cheap country. This, perhaps, is no special virtue, and is a mere matter of demand and supply. But when the price is fixed, whatever it may be, the conduct of the Welshman or Welshwoman towards a guest is distinctly creditable. There is no desire, speaking of course generally, to overreach you, and there is every desire to make you comfortable. I have never seen any sign of that undue grasping that comes so easily and so readily to the average professional entertainer, great and small, in most countries. And there are always most admirable manners, and often a readiness to do all sorts of little things that are not in the contract and have been unsolicited, and for which no *quid pro quo* can be given or is expected. Another type of hostess with which most of us are familiar, who has no manners worth mentioning and cultivates a bored expression, and a keen eye for swelling a bill, and would not dream of doing a superfluous kindness, would no doubt stigmatise the Celtic attitude as insincere. All I can say is, give me insincerity, if this be it, and when on my travels may I always be in such hands. I think perhaps the Welshman or Welshwoman of this class wants taking the right way. If the humbler type of landlord is treated as a machine, or a servant, he is apt to shrivel up and hold his virtues in abeyance. He would not forget his manners, but

the latent antagonism of the Celt to the Saxon would be awakened. It must be remembered too that there are a great many Saxons of a rough-natured and rough-tongued type, who go about Wales, as they go about France and Belgium, making fun of the people and ridiculing their language; and, not being privileged to see themselves as others see them, are entirely convinced that they are the salt of the earth. Welshmen like this sort of thing even less than French and Belgians. For one nation can afford to ignore the gibes of another; but one section, and that the smallest and weakest one of a country, does not appreciate being ridiculed and derided by the other; and the measures which the Saxon, too often on his walks abroad, takes to show his superiority to another race are not conciliatory or convincing, as most of us who have been much about the world know well. "There are no better men than the best, and no worse men than the worst, of the Welsh," said Geraldus Cambrensis in 1188, or thereabouts. "When a Welshman is a good 'un, he is a good 'un, and when he's a bad 'un, he is a bad 'un," a shrewd gamekeeping friend of mine, bred in Norfolk, but whose duties lay for half his life on the Welsh marches, used to say some seven hundred years later. And both Geraldus and the keeper were excellent judges, and had great opportunities.

While in politics—politics meaning chiefly church and chapel—the Welshman is usually a Radical, he is still at heart eminently Conservative. His political leaders are never tired of accusing him of servility. There is, I suppose, a good name and a bad name for everything, and I do not know whether it is servile or polite for, let us say, a small farmer to touch his hat to the squire or to people of a social degree superior to his own. I should have supposed it was ordinary courtesy, the social superior, if he be in truth a gentleman, returning the salute. I cannot believe that life can be in any way better or nobler by reducing roadside manners to the hog-like brutality that nowadays distinguishes so many parts of this free island, and such as a down-east Yankee would blush for. Of all peoples, I suppose the Saxon has been

least endowed by nature with outward graces of this kind. But political ethics that would rob him of the trifle he has, and then point to the result as a spectacle for congratulation among men, must be a strange creed indeed. At any rate, I trust it may be long before the Welsh countryman returns a passing "Boreu dda" or "Nos dach" with a surly stare. It is, at any rate, quite certain that at present he still cherishes much respect for an old name and an old stock. The chapel has done much to banish interest in older history and legend; but it has not eliminated the harmless side of the old feudal feeling. I am not sure that it wishes to. I think its high priests themselves, or very many of them, have a great regard for such things; and why should they not? The Welsh Radical frets himself less, I think, about social distinctions, and all that pertains to that thorny question, than the Saxon of the same persuasion. Commonplaces of a contrary kind may drop from the lips of political leaders, but they are not seriously responded to—not in the agricultural parts of North Wales at any rate.

But the chapel and Sunday school are, after all, the chief centres of Welsh life. The church, outside the towns, with few exceptions, is not at present comparable to the other in this respect. How could it be? When from the average congregation of a Welsh country church you have deducted the squire [1] and the parson, and possibly a doctor, with their respective households, and a certain number of immediate outdoor dependants, there will not often be many pews regularly occupied. The numbers will vary in their paucity, while here and there you will to be sure find a full church, but we are not concerned with exceptions. The chapel in rural North Wales, speaking generally, holds the field and influences its life. It is true that when the young people leave home for England, or distant towns, a reaction from the sombreness of Calvinism is very apt to take hold of them, and the music

[1] If there is one and he understands Welsh also. See note relating to special English services, page 420.

and ritual of the Church of England to lead them ready captives. But in their own country parish, this straying from the fold is rare, and to the would-be strayer a rather formidable proceeding. It is not, in Wales at any rate, a mere question, as some English writers who discuss the question seem to imagine, of sitting in church or chapel upon a Sunday. The chapel is an elaborate and highly organised club. The social intercourse and the recreation of its members centres in it, with its classes, concerts, meetings, picnics, and so forth, and above all business relations are vitally concerned and secession would very often spell ruin. To break away from that community, and repair to what would seem the cold formality and the social stiffness of the parish church; to throw up a club, in short, to which you have belonged all your life, and which includes nearly all your friends, would surely require some very strong reason. Now if the reader will put himself in the place of a Welsh man or woman of the lower middle class, does he think it likely that he would do this thing? Seeing that it is admitted by most sane people nowadays that both church and chapel lead to heaven, is a half-educated person likely to throw up nearly everything, and face the fire of all his friends, for an abstract admiration for the stately periods of the Litany? Where you find a Welsh clergyman outside the towns who has made an empty church full or half-full, you may be quite sure that he is no common man, or else that he has had a little luck in the way of chapel dissensions and divisions, which is often a source of profit to the church. But because you find yourself one of a dozen at morning service, it by no means follows that the parson will preach a poor sermon, or that he is necessarily of a sluggish temperament. What can a poor vicar do if he is face to face with a united and contented chapelry? I have mentioned elsewhere that a danger which does threaten the Nonconformist body is a tendency to revolt among the younger at the rigidity of the older generation. But the latter will no doubt give way. The Welshman, it need hardly be said, is a staunch Sabbatarian. But then he is not generally an

aggressive one outside his own sect. He is consistent enough in his own practice, but does not look glum at those whose opinions permit them to walk abroad, or even ride a bicycle, on the Sabbath day : so long, that is to say, as they are not members of his chapel. If they are, no such immunity is at all likely. The parish doctor of a village with which I am well acquainted is a Nonconformist, and lives a long way from his chapel, so to give his hard-worked horses and his groom a rest, he took to coming to chapel and to visiting his Sunday patients on a bicycle. The result of all this was a letter of remonstrance from the deacons. Having an established reputation he could afford to give them a little piece of his mind. But had he been youthful and struggling, he would undoubtedly have been wise to have brought his horses and his groom back to their Sunday work. This is but one of a half-a-dozen such cases I could cite. Education, however, is advancing by leaps and bounds in Wales. Paradoxes like this will soon become apparent in all the full glare of their absurdity to the rising generation, and such prodigious and illogical bigotry defeat its own object.

The Welsh have, indeed, a most praiseworthy devotion to public worship, and in pursuit of this will, even if Nonconformists, frequently patronise the church. Lest it should be said that it is to look at one another's bonnets, or to see one another home or to enjoy music, I should like to recall an instance of what may in truth be called heroic church-going. It was in Anglesey, and I had walked over on a hot Sunday afternoon with a friend to see a certain inscribed stone, which lay within a small and ancient and out-of-the-way church in the neighbourhood. When we arrived a single bell was tinkling for service, and the scene within was much more curious than the inscribed stone. The building was diminutive to a degree, and absolutely unkempt. A few rough benches were placed on the rude stone floor : and on these were seated less than a dozen youths and old men of the very humblest class. The parson had ridden over from a distance, and proceeded with some expedition to read the

afternoon service in Welsh, no music of any kind being possible under such conditions. But at the beginning of the service three smartly dressed girls, evidently belonging to an altogether different social stratum from the shock-headed youths who sat hunched up on the front benches, put in an appearance. The ladies, we naturally assumed, belonged to some ardent church-going family, and endured this primitive performance for the sake of example.

Now there was a cottage abutting on the churchyard, and as we came out, there sat at its open door a ruddy and stalwart matron, looking almost as if she invited conversation. My friend, who could speak Welsh glibly, at once embraced the opportunity, and enquired as to the three young women. We were told that they were the Miss Joneses, daughters of a well-to-do farmer, who lived some two miles off, that they were by no means church-women, but on the contrary strong chapel members, and the reason of their attendance, which was regular, was much more astonishing. For it seems, there being services at their own chapel in the morning and evening only, to fill up the measure of their assiduity they walked two miles on the Sunday afternoon to this, the most primitively depressing church service I have ever assisted at in my life. Our informant was of quite another type. She was a prodigious bigot, and took a savage joy in not having been inside the old church in her life. This, however, I certainly should not have known had not my companion been a Nonconformist and a Welshman.

I have spoken of theology as being one of Bala's products. For one thing, the training college for the ministry of the Calvinistic Methodists, by far the largest and most powerful Nonconformist body in Wales, is here. But still more than this, Bala was a busy centre in the great revival of the last century that finally ended in the rise of Nonconformity in Wales, and the virtual collapse for the time being of the Church. Like most towns in North Wales, the old parish church lies some distance off. We passed Llanycil, it will be remembered, on

our way hither, picturesquely filling the strip between the road and the lake. Here was buried Charles of Bala, whose statue now stands in the town. Charles was a graduate of Jesus College, Oxford, and a clergyman. He was ordained about 1778, but remained within the fold of the Church till 1811, when he broke away, one may almost say in despair, with many others, and founded the Calvinistic Methodist body, which has ever since counted for so much in Welsh life. Howell Harris had been the first originator of regular "field preaching" in Wales, and in 1741 there were great riots in Bala, Harris being knocked down and beaten with stones and sticks. It was soon after this that the Dissenters began to threaten that secession which, as I have said, did not actually take place till this century. The Welsh Church, one need hardly say, was now at its very lowest ebb; many of its clergy seemed to think that there was upon them no obligation of decency or morality of whatsoever kind. The evangelists who arose, chiefly from their ranks, and who were, in truth, noble and single-minded men, were treated almost as criminals. The ignorance and irreligion among the Welsh mountains was what might only have been expected. There were few Bibles, and few people could read or write. This handful of Methodists not only represented nearly everything there was of religion in the church, but two or three of them gave up their lives to the cause of education, founding humble schools all over the country. The story is not a pleasant one, and it is much too long to tell. But by snubbing and persecution and fatuous courses generally, the Welsh church had by the beginning of this century purged itself of nearly all that was vital or noble in its body, and having done so and founded rivals that were almost to exterminate it, sank back into the lethargy which, after all, was much more the fault of its English rulers than of its rank and file.

Charles, at any rate, is the patron saint of Bala. His statue looks down its leafy street, and the nursery of the sect he founded rises in grey stone upon the hill slope above, while

his bones lie in the romantic churchyard of Llanycil. The memory of all these things is very vivid among Welsh Non-conformists. It has shaped to some extent their national life. The chief interest they take in the past is in the men that made this bit of history, and no opinions on the Welsh church question are worth the paper they are written on or the breath they are uttered with if this attitude is not recognised and understood. Among their rank and file there is not, as a rule, one particle of sentiment for the hoary and often beautiful buildings that represent the faith, and certainly over-shadow the bones, of their forefathers. What there is, is reserved for the naked, unbeautiful, modern chapel which represents the struggles of Howell Harris and Charles of Bala and a host of heroes, whose names are unknown beyond the bounds of Wales.

To descend, however, from these elevated reflections, it was at the White Lion at Bala, still one of the best inns in Wales, that Borrow smacked his lips over the "finest glass of ale he had ever tasted in his life." Those, however, were the days of home-brewing, and by the same token it should not be forgotten that Bala, under local enterprise, is making efforts to introduce a "Welsh whisky" to the world, the distillery being on the banks of the Treweryn, not far from the town. It was at Bala, too, that Borrow, recalling the number of Joneses he had encountered, cried for mercy from the inevitable name. I have some reason to think with Borrow that Bala has yet another claim to notoriety, as being the very home and centre of that world-famous family. I was asked recently to secure lodgings there for a friend, and not knowing the capacities of the place in that particular, I betook me to one of the chief shops and sought guidance from its proprietor. The result of this was to turn my steps toward the outskirts, where a house called Plâs B——, presided over by a Mrs. Jones, caters for visitors. Plâs B—— seemed everything that could be desired, but was unfortunately already bespoken. "But," said Mrs. Jones, "there is a house at the corner of yonder street where I

believe they let apartments." I found her impression to be correct. The apartments were to be let, and were excellent; but the situation did not recommend itself. So taking note for possible future use that the name of this lady also was Jones, I fell back upon my shopkeeper friend for further recommendations. "I tell you what, sir," he said, "there is an agent here for these matters, and your best plan would be to ask him; and, by the way, there he is just going into that shop across the street." "What is his name?" said I. "Jones, sir!—R. T. Jones." This

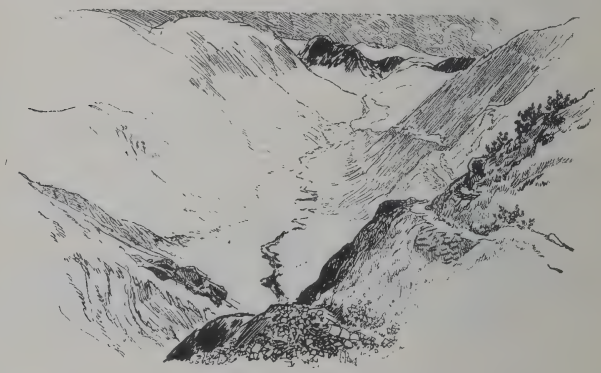


The outlet of the Dee.

was No. 3. I lost no time in tracking Mr. R. T. Jones and interviewing him on the subject in hand. Rooms in Bala when the college students are in residence are not plentiful, and the expert had to gently rub his forehead for a few seconds. "Yes, sir," said he, "I can direct you to two places, each of which I can recommend. The first is up this lane to the left—a Mrs. Jones, sir, an excellent woman, and the other is nearer the college." "And," said I, though the odds seemed terribly against it, "I do hope and trust that is kept by a Mrs. Jones too." "Yes, sure," said Mr. R. T. Jones, to my delight, quite unconscious of course that there was any humour surrounding the transaction, "that is

a Mrs. Jones too, a Mrs. Cadwalader Jones." This was a pretty long run of Joneses; and if ever among the wonders the future has in store a great reunion of the Jones clan should be celebrated there is not the slightest doubt it should be held at Bala, though competition throughout North Wales, for the matter of that, would be keen enough.

A hundred years ago Bala was wholly absorbed in the knitting of stockings, from two to five hundred pounds worth being sold from there every week; and the industry even yet is not quite



On the road to Lake Vyrnwy.

dead. It was not only the women and children whose needles went merrily from morn till eve, but the very men gave themselves over to the gentle and profitable toil. A conspicuous object at the end of the town is a prehistoric tumulus known as Tomen of Bala, the first of a long line of such mounds stretching down the Dee valley, erected by a race forgotten and for purposes unknown. Upon the Tomen of Bala, say old writers, the army of knitters used to sit in fine weather looking down the lake, and made a brave show; while in winter they gathered round the firesides, where aged seers expounded the legends of former days, or harpers played the airs of Wales, and local

bards recited their last productions. These things are done now under the elaborate guise of the Eisteddfod, of which Bala, like every other little town in North Wales, has its share.

An Eisteddfod is a function which everybody who has any desire for seeing Welsh life should sit through, once at any rate, though this on the part of a person ignorant of Welsh is no small feat, seeing that it lasts, with intervals for meals, about twelve hours. There are, first, the competitions between choirs and individuals, all rendering, that is to say, the same piece. Then the awards are made known, and the chief judge criticises each performance. There are speeches, too, of which the glories of the Eisteddfod are the chief burden. Then the local bards mount the rostrum one after the other, and recite the verses they have composed on the subject of the day, and when they have retired, each man to his seat in the audience, and the award is given, and the laureate of the day crowned, the blushing poet is led from his place to the stage again by his brother bards and then the ancient and mystic process of "chairing" is gone through. A naked sword is held above the victor's head, accompanied by some time-honoured incantation. The new hero of the moment is then pressed down into the carved armchair of oak standing ready for him. In this he sits for all to admire—and poets are not always physically admirable—for the rest of the day, carrying it home with him as a treasured relic of his triumph. The day, or rather night, is then finished with an ordinary concert, at which Welsh professional talent from London often assists. Every village and district contains several individuals who give some of their leisure hours to the composition of poetry, or what would fain be poetry.[1] Every one of these singers has a "bardic name," which he greatly cherishes. The Eisteddfod, at any rate, is a common ground, on which church and chapel meet; the squire and the deacon, the parson and the preacher, sitting side by side in the seats of honour. If any people are hostile to it, it is

[1] The great national Eisteddfod is of course a more elaborate performance.

a section of Nonconformity, who regard it as bordering too much on the frivolous and encouraging levity!

Just outside Bala town the beautiful Treweryn comes pouring its strong clear streams through the wooded gorges of Rhiwlas with its fine old mansion and great sporting estate, so familiar by name throughout the Principality. Prices went hence to Parliament in Charles I.'s time, and Prices live there yet. In the flat meadows below the lake and town the Treweryn and freshly-liberated Dee mingle their waters, which go rushing hence for a dozen miles through the sweet vale of Edeyrnion, beating, ultimately, the parapets of that old bridge at Corwen where we lingered for a few minutes, it may be remembered, at an early stage of our journey. The view up Bala lake from this lower end is full of charm, and by no means devoid of the grandeur that is sometimes said to find no place here. To see Llyn Tegid at its best, however, is to drift in a boat over its surface on a summer evening, when its rich sloping banks are throwing shadows on the water, and the twin peaks of the Arrans and the mighty mass of Cader are looming clear and grim against the western sky.

My space is nearly out and our journey is nearly over, but I propose to employ what remains of the first in looking at Bala's new rival, which was called into being some ten years ago and is about as many miles distant. It may seem, perhaps, a trifle absurd to speak of an old and famous and beautiful lake suffering from sudden competition and having its supremacy threatened by a new reservoir. But when we get to Lake Vyrnwy this will be more readily understood.

The road which connects the two lakes, the old one and the new, is not such as a cyclist would select for a merry spin. It is, in fact, rough and steep, having to surmount the Berwyns and traverse an unpeopled country. Before plunging, however, into the valley of the Hirnant, which strikes southward from the foot of Bala lake, we must not omit to note the old manor house of Rhiwaedog, or "the bloody brow," that has seen

much history. For a great battle was fought there once between the Saxons and the Welsh, where the noted warrior bard Llowarch Hên witnessed the death of the last of his four-and-twenty sons, Cynddelw, and wrote a pathetic elegy on the subject, still extant, and familiar to Welsh scholars. The owner of Rhiwaedog in the fourteenth century was fighting in France with John, Duke of Lancaster, and must have been a companion of Glyndwr's youth, being virtually his neighbour, and both attached to the English Court.



Approach to Lake Vyrnwy.

I may as well say at once that there are about three miles of steady pull to the ridge of the Berwyn, which the road crosses, and that this is from 1200 to 1400 feet above Bala lake. Grouse rise continually to the right and left, for these are some of the best moors in Wales ; but there is little else of life to be met upon this lonely pass. Hills sweep away in every direction ; and the scene, though not so beautiful as many passes we have crossed, is wild and impressive. We are soon upon the sources of the Vyrnwy, and, descending a bare valley, pass ultimately through a wooded gorge on to the shores of the largest lake in

Wales, and upon the whole, I think, the most beautiful. We see before us from this upper end a long valley, bounded upon either side by lofty hills, and filled, for as far as we can see it, which is about five miles, with water. Once down upon its shores, the mountain road we have been laboriously travelling changes to a carefully made level track, as good as any in all Wales. Here as we roll easily along the edge of the lake, there is ample opportunity to look about us, and try to realize, among other things, that not more than a dozen years ago, where now all is water, fields, farms, and houses, a village, and a church, and a population of some 500 souls, were peacefully living out their sequestered lives without a thought of the coming deluge, beneath which the distant city of Liverpool in its needs for fresh water was about to bury them.

There was no spot in all Britain where life had flowed more tranquilly than in this remote village and parish of Llanwddyn, the more so as it forms a cul de sac, the valley terminating abruptly in the bold front of the Berwyn mountains, which we have just crossed. Something like 500 souls, who spoke no English worth mentioning, were living here at the time when the news came on them like a thunderclap, that they were to be wiped off the face of the earth. I do not think it would be unjust to the average villager of, let us say, Wiltshire or Suffolk, to suppose, that under a similar shock, he would find more than solace in the prospects of financial compensation inevitable in so drastic a scheme.

The Celt of Wales may, or may not, lack some of the virtues of the English rustic, but his affection for the home of his fathers is incomparably greater, and often indeed rises superior to gold or worldly advancement. At any rate, when the Corporation of Liverpool, after hovering in threatening attitude over many Welsh valleys, descended finally upon this devoted spot, the consternation among a portion of its inhabitants was very great indeed. It is painful enough, for those who are sensitive on such matters, to be dragged from their homes ; but to have

these and every neighbouring landmark buried permanently under eight or ten fathoms of water is still more distressing, and a strange experience in the annals of the poor. It was commonly said that many of the old people who were thus uprooted did not survive the process, but died of a broken heart, as old people often die after a disastrous and humiliating war. Most of the village was blown up or pulled down preparatory to the damming of the waters. One stout old dame vowed that she would perish beneath the ruins of her roof-tree rather than be evicted, and resisted all efforts to remove her, with an energy that would have



Lake Vyrnwy from the hotel grounds.

done credit to a Tipperary heroine playing to an applauding audience of peasants and politicians.

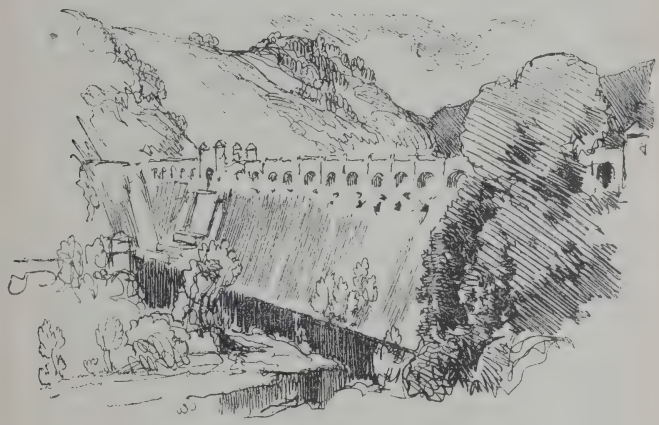
The vale of Llanwddyn, however, has long ceased to exist: church, inn, vicarage and village street have all gone. Not only were the living transferred from their habitations, but the very dead, whose bones could still be found, were taken from their graves, and laid in a fresh resting place, some 300 feet nearer heaven, and under the shadow of a newly-built church.

The hotel, built by the Corporation of Liverpool on a high

spur above the foot of the lake, commands an outlook of a kind differing from any that I know of, from a hotel window in Wales. We find ourselves looking down from a considerable height over rustling tree-tops, which seem to dip into the shining surface of this noble sheet of water, that, stretching away westward for five miles, seems to press right into the very heart of the Berwyn mountains. One behind the other lofty hills, from an elevation of 2,000 feet, drop their shoulders to the water's edge, till the gradually narrowing vista is closed by the great wall of grouse moors which separates the waters that swell the Severn from those that swell the Dee. This is much the most imposing lake in all Wales; and the Corporation of Liverpool take a just pride in their unique property, for it is not only the water itself that belongs to them, but many thousand acres of mountain and moorland on which grouse now fly as thickly as in any part of the Principality.

Though Liverpool owns it, neither Manchester nor Liverpool come here in the tourist sense, for of accommodation other than the admirable hotel, which caters chiefly for sportsmen, there is none. Nor would any efforts to provide this be permitted, seeing that population by the lake shore is being reduced to a minimum for the sake of the purity of the water. The upper fringe of old Llanwddyn civilisation still remains above the waves, and with pastures, woodlands, and a few ancient homesteads, makes a rich and pleasing margin between the bold face of the mountains and the lake. But the bulk of it lies as effectually buried beneath the waves as the drowned cantrep of Ardudwy, and looking up the lake or looking over it from any point where the dam is not actually visible, there is nothing to suggest that the waters have been pent up here by the hand of man. To engineers, indeed, the very dam that holds back this immense volume of waters, thirty to eighty feet in depth and eleven miles in circumference, is a work of profound interest. Happily its builders had art in their minds as well as safety, and the stonework which carries the high

road across the dam, some six hundred yards at this narrow point of egress from shore to shore, is so far from being an eyesore, that I have heard artists speak of it as a thing of beauty in itself. The hotel is of the first grade and in good hands. Being not far short of a thousand feet above sea level, it is beyond doubt the most bracing place in North Wales, where a comfortable existence can be led, as well as occupying a site whose beauty in summer it would be hard to exaggerate. A



The Great Dam.

perfect road, too, has been made all round the lake, and being so deep in the Montgomery mountains, whose highways are all either perpendicular or rough, this twelve miles of smooth macadam amid a scene so fair is doubly grateful. Deeply indented and curving bays on the lake shore now mark the spot where lateral valleys in former days sent their tributary streams spouting down into the Vyrnwy, which then meandered through flat meadows. Around many of these inlets the planter has been busy. On their quiet surface, free from the breezes that outside are almost always stirring, the shadows of exotic trees,

of copper beeches and maples, and arbor vitæ, grow longer year by year; and each June the gay bloom of azaleas and rhododendrons light up with increasing splendour the base of the eternal hills.

Lake Vyrnwy has become a very notable fishing resort, and is probably the best trouting lake south of the Scottish Highlands, accessible to any one who is ready to pay for a licence. The stocking of so large a sheet of water and the progress of the fish has been an experiment interesting to all pisciculturalists. But the reader being probably not of that persuasion, I will refrain from discourse on a congenial theme, merely remarking that the once small troutlets which peopled the infant Vyrnwy and its tributary brooks have proved better than any imported stock, and may be seen, now grown to goodly trout of a foot long, breaking the surface when a rise is on in every direction and in all parts of the lake.

Indeed, it is in the intervals of a day's fishing, when out on the broad bosom of the lake, that you may best take in both the beauty and romance of the place. Then is the time, after straining your eyes for an hour or so at where you know your flies to be among the dancing ripples, then is the time to lie back and rest them on the silent crags towering to the sky, on the emerald turf, fresh with mountain mists and warmed by the suns of May, that sweep upward to their feet. The middle heights, too, are all ablaze with golden gorse and sprinkled thick with feathery birch trees. From the straggling woods of primitive oaks, hoary with trailing moss and waist deep in bracken, that dip here and there to the water, comes at such times the note of the cuckoo, full and clear. Upon the high, rough pastures that fringe the moorland one hears all day long the bell-like trill of the nesting curlew, while in sunny thickets by the water side the thrush pours out her homelier gush of melody. But perhaps after all it is at sunset, when the day's work is over, and the breeze is dead, and we are stealing slowly homeward down the lake, that the spell of its strange associations is

strongest. On the banks of Lough Neagh, according to Tom Moore.

> "When the fisherman strays,
> At the dim cold eve's declining,
> He sees the round towers of other days
> In the wave beneath him shining."

Surely we too, as we drift along over the steely surface of Lake Vyrnwy, with the mountains darkling upon either hand, and the crimson after-glow paling into green behind the rugged brow of Allt-yr-Erydd, may indulge in reveries justifiable as those of Tom Moore's fisherman. We may behold in the glass beside us, with the eye of memory at any rate, if not of fancy, the cheerful homesteads of Llanwddyn, that now lie ruined and sodden beneath the seventy feet of water over which we glide. In the village street big eels are now sliming in the mud ; over the old hearthstone of the "Powis Arms," that welcomed with its cheery blaze so many generations of travellers from the cold passes of the Berwyns, this is surely a meet occasion to drop the tributary tear. Where hedgerows bloomed gay with wild dogrose and honeysuckle huge trout, that human eye never beholds but angling fancy fondly pictures, sail lazily around, no doubt amid dank and trailing weeds. The old church that St. Wyddyn founded in the sixth century, and the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem rebuilt in the twelfth, should surely have some message to send up from the depths. In the Duke of Beaufort's famous progress through Wales in the reign of James the Second, his secretary tells us how the bell in its little belfry "jangled for loyalty with such strange noise and good affection" as his grace passed, that the writer was impelled to enter the church and discover of what material it might be fashioned. Nor is it given to many people to catch trout fifty feet above the fields where they have once shot partridges and the bogs where they have once killed snipe.

A story is told too of a native of Llanwddyn who, after years of wandering in foreign lands, thought he would look up his old friends. Not being of a communicative turn of mind no hint of

the fate that had befallen his native village reached his ears on the way from the sea-coast, so his sensations on surmounting the hills above the Vyrnwy and seeing nothing but a waste of waters beneath him, may be well imagined. The form which the surprise of this unsuspecting seaman took is differently reported, but at any rate he survived the shock. Perhaps the disappearance of the "Powis Arms," the only public-house in the neighbourhood, was not the lightest part of the blow. Both legend and history have been tolerably active in this old-world corner. It was one of the favourite resorts, for one thing, of those terrible red-haired banditti of Mawddwy, whom it will be remembered Sir John Wynn's ancestors had such trouble with when they first settled at the head of the Conway. It is pleasant, too, to know that the cell of the saint who gave the church and valley its name has just escaped the deluge; for its site is said to be where the Ceunant waterfall splashes down into the lake. That this holy man, however, was no St. Kevin, the marvellous tenacity of Welsh nomenclature has provided us with incontestable evidence; for a path is still called Llwybr Wddyn, along which, so says tradition, he used to walk to the cell of a certain pious lady, St. Monacella, who fled from her home in Ireland and established herself at no great distance up the valley.

The blasting of the big stone in the river just below the dam, and the abominable outrage thereby perpetrated on the spirit that had been held in awe by so many generations of Llanwddyn peasants, has been already spoken of in a former chapter. But it is neither history, nor legend, nor old wives' tales, that most people will be thinking of, should they be fortunate enough to spend a fine week in this fascinating spot. The peace and spaciousness, the beauty, and even the grandeur of the outlook is unforgettable if enjoyed when the skies are clear and the elements are kind. And it so happens that when the summer sun is setting, it sends a trail of golden glory quivering down the centre of the long and narrow lake which starts at the further end

five miles away, and burns into the very woods blowing beneath your feet. Below the dam, too, is a charming scene, where wooded hills press close together, and the Vyrnwy, released from its vast prison house, leaps joyously between them and urges on its crystal streams, by emerald meadows, by cottages and scattered hamlets towards Meifod, where dwelt in ancient days the Princes of all Powysland.

Lake Vyrnwy is twelve miles from Llanfyllin, the terminus



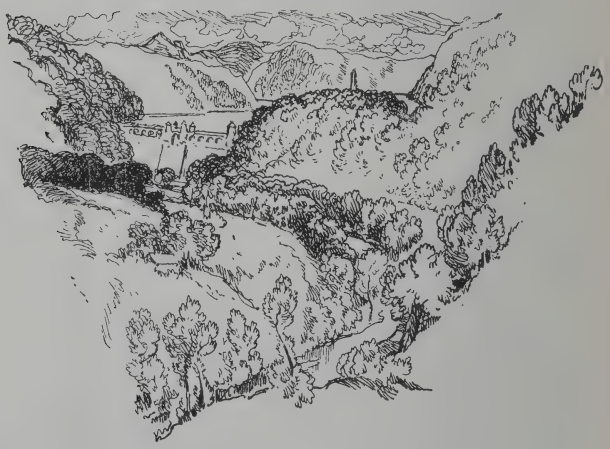
Llanfyllin.

of a short railway from Llanymynech. Thence lies our way out of Wales. And at a point some two miles along it, after climbing the steep hill out of the Vyrnwy valley and before starting upon the long run down towards the English border, I would fain pause for a moment to cast one backward look. For no more characteristic bit of wild Wales to carry away as a final memory could very well be found. The deep green valley with the Vyrnwy glittering and sparkling through its midst, the white homesteads glinting amid their sheltering groves, the black cattle browsing on the narrow lowlands, the mountain

sheep dotted about the breezy moorland, the wooded ridges upon which the new Llanwddyn is so picturesquely perched, with just a gleam of the lake below, and behind all the backbone of the Berwyns rolling along the distant sky line.

Well indeed may the sons of a land so fair cherish for it a something more than common passion. If the peculiar pathos that belongs to Celtic countries, where misery, poverty and depopulation strike an all pervading note of melancholy, finds no expression among the Welsh hills, the lack of it is surely no matter for regret. Perhaps rather the very thrift and quiet prosperity that so distinguishes the Principality, helps to sustain the tenacity with which these old Britons cling to their ancient customs, and, above all, to their ancient tongue; and in so doing fulfil with such picturesque completeness Taliesin's famous prophecy.

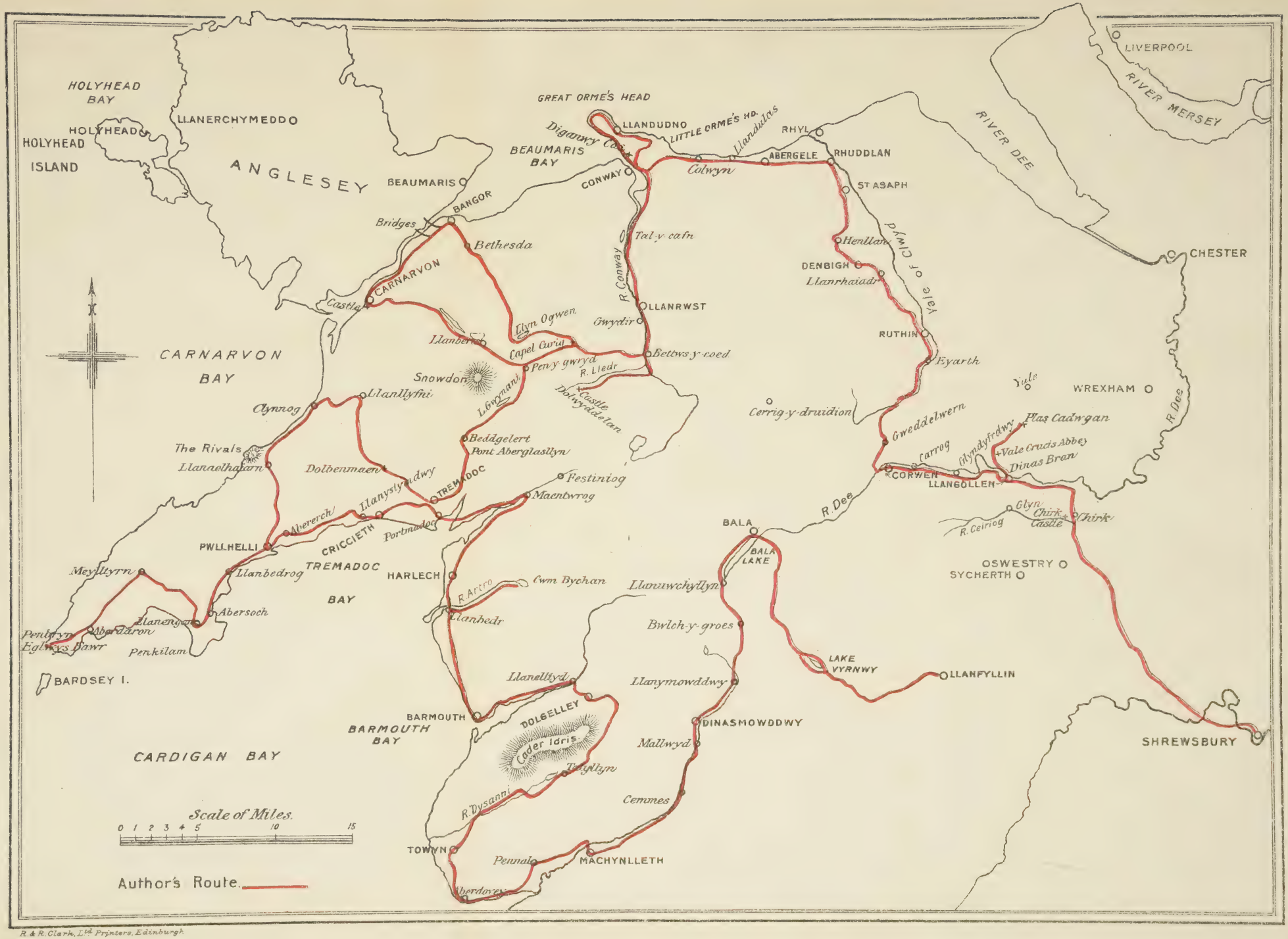
Their Lord they shall praise,
Their language they shall keep,
Their land they shall lose,
Except wild Wales.



A parting glimpse.



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